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POLITICS AND FOLK RELIGION

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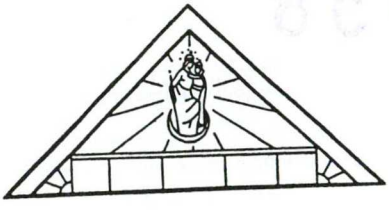

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POLITICS AND FOLK RELIGION

POLITICS AND FOLK RELIGION
(FOREWORD)

3rd SYMPOSIUM OF THE SIEF COMMISSION OF FOLK RELIGION
24th–26th SEPTEMBER 1999

After two successful meetings of SIEF Commission of Folk Religion in Stockholm (Sweden, 1993) and Chaves (Portugal, 1996) the 3rd Symposium is invited and organized by the Department of Ethnology, University of Szeged.

Politics and folk religion. The question is once again very timely. The Kosovo crisis, Northern Ireland, Dagestan, and I could go on listing all the tensions which appear in our world as religious conflicts. I hope that the papers[1] presented (and published) here will help to give us a better understanding of these processes and that at the end of the conference we will be able to say that we have learnt a great deal, and can offer our analyses for politicians who are able to make the world a more peaceful place.

This conference is an important event, not only for the Department of Ethnology, University of Szeged and the City of Szeged, but for the whole of Hungarian ethnology. This can be seen in the fact that it has been supported by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, the Municipality of Szeged, the University and the Centre of European Studies/ Phare Programme.

Popular religion, folk religion or vernacular religion is our Department's special field of teaching and research. Sándor Bálint, the founder of "religiöse Volkskunde" or "Volksfrömmigkeitsforschung" in Hungary, was Professor of our Department between 1947–1964. We wish to carry on his intellectual legacy. Our current and planned research in Hungary, the Carpathian Basin, and elsewhere in Europe, our publications, regular Hungarian and international conferences, international relations and international student seminars all serve this aim. The present conference is also part of these efforts.

We have attempted to create an appropriate atmosphere with an exhibiton of photography of Magdolna Szabó and Imre Küllős in the conference hall, illustrating the conference' topic with pictures on destroyed Hungarian churches in the Yugoslavian war from Croatia and attractive phenomena of religious culture and popular religion.

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[1] Unfortunately there are two papers missing from the volume – Margaret MACKAY (Edinburgh): *"How Shall We Sing the Lord's Song in a New Land?"* and Mare KÖIVA (Tartu): *People Waiting for the "White Ship" – Symbol and Practice.* The paper of Bertalan PUSZTAI: *Religion as a Support in Creating Identity* has been published already elsewhere, the one of Jaanus PLAAT: *Religious Movements and Congregations in West Estonia...* was not presented at the conference.

INTRODUCTION

Anders GUSTAVSSON

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Abstract: People's beliefs, whether they fall within the teachings of the church or not, belong to the folk religion. The studies of folk religion comprise all social classes, peasant culture and middle class as well as workers. Investigations of folk religion do not only focus on the pre-industrial era, but also on religiously oriented beliefs and customs among people in the secularised modern society.

In our days it is important to examine how the many immigrants and their churches adjust to completely new conditions, for example in the way of dressing and concerning food prohibitions.

One field of research which is suited for international comparisons concerns the significance of religion in cultural meetings across borders of different kinds, and those conflicts and forms of co-operation that may arise.

Religion and politics do not have to be opposed, but may also be linked to each other. What looks like religious antagonisms may in fact have a political motivation. The main interest for the folklorist is the role religion plays for common people within different groupings and not just within the political or religious elite.

Keywords: Religious belief, religious adaptation, immigrants, cultural meetings, religion and politics

At first I will say something about folk religion. What is that? People's beliefs, whether they fall within the teachings of the church or not, belong to the folk religion. This is true irrespective of if people believe in and put their trust in divine beings, or relate to evil beings like the devil or other supernatural beings. Popular visions, as well as experiences of miracles and religious healing, are included in the field of study. When talking about folk religiosity it is not relevant to separate popular belief and other kinds of belief that would be labelled religious belief. What people believe in must be possible to view as belonging to the field of folk religion, even though earlier folkloristic researchers often separated the religious dimension from the popular belief. The latter was seen as belonging to the folkloristic field of study, while the religious belief was placed within the realm of religious studies. Folklorists were not supposed to concern themselves with folk religion, but a shift in this respect came about when a new generation of folklorists started to establish themselves during the 1970s.

The studies of folk religion comprise all social classes, peasant culture and middle class as well as workers. Religion is evident both in ordinary people and in members of revival movements or in immigrants belonging to another religion than Christianity. Folk religion, in the form of specific conduct and rituals, is not exercised only in public places of worship like the churches, but also to a large extent in the homes, both in the everyday life and on Sundays and other holidays.

Investigations of folk religion do not only focus on the pre-industrial era, when Christianity had a stronger position, but also on religiously oriented beliefs and customs among people in the secularized modern society. Also the New Age and Satanism of our time become interesting objects of study.

Studies of folk religiosity have come to attract more and more attention in several countries. In 1989 in Graz, Austria, an Ethnology congress was held around the theme "Folk piety". The lectures have been published in the form of an anthology (Volksfrömmigkeit 1990). In Germany and Austria, an anthology with the title "Religion und Alltag" was published in 1990, in which the authors analyse autobiographies from Catholic areas (Religion 1990). At the international congress, which SIEF (Society International for Ethnology and Folklore) organized in Bergen in Norway in 1990, it was decided that a special commission within the SIEF, for the study of "Folk Religion" should be established. I was given the task of conducting this commission.

A first symposium was held in Stockholm in 1993, in close cooperation with The Swedish Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities which paid the expenses. The topic was "Religion in Everyday Life Then and Now". The lecturers came from the whole of Europe, and their contributions have been published by Nils-Arvid BRINGÉUS in 1994 (Religion 1994). The focus was on how religion manifests itself in lifestyle, beliefs, upbringing and norms.

The theme for the following SIEF symposium in Portugal 1996 was "Folk Religion, Continuity and Change". Within this wide topic one can illustrate to what extent folk religion forms a force of change or plays a preserving role in a changeable world. Folk religion may, from a modernity perspective, be studied with respect to the development from a farmers' society to an industrial society. What is old may be preserved, at the same time as it is exposed to changes. It is important to illuminate the stability as well as the change, and the forces behind such processes. Changes may also mean a return to earlier conditions, customs and beliefs. How and why does this happen in a modern society? How is it that the old becomes filled with a new content, and thereby gets a new life in a new social context? What influence does the media have as a force of change? We returned to such issues in lectures and discussions during the symposium. The empirical data was collected from different parts of Europe, and ranged from past to present times, but problems and perspectives constituted a common base for discussion. The contributions have been published in a book edited by me and Maria SANTA MONTEZ in Lisboa (Folk Religion 1999).

I also want to introduce a few general issues which are suited for research and network cooperation on a European basis as well. In the Nordic countries we have discussed a cooperation consisting of a network around the theme "The Adaptation of the Nordic Churches and Revival movements/Free Churches to the Modern/Industrial Society". The network wants to examine how the State churches and the revival movements adjusted to the changing conditions of society, when the modern industrial society developed, in the middle of the 19th century, and the progress until today. In that connection we can ask: What happens if the adjustment to

the surrounding world becomes too complete? In what way does that prepare the ground for the formation of new religious movements. Such movements may on the one hand have fundamentalist traits, in contrast to too much adjustment within other churches and denominations. The movements may on the other hand be signs of an adaptation to the needs of the modern people, e.g. self-regard and self-realization, happiness in this earthly life.

In what way is the development of new movements related to the social engagement or lack of engagement of the established churches? What does it mean if the churches become too centred around this world and neglect or diminish the transcendent perspective on faith, life as a journey towards eternity? What about the view on good and bad? Why has Satanism won attention in later days? Is it a reaction against the churches' moderation and denial of the evil forces in the existence, compared to before.

What has ecumenism meant for the processes of adjustment to the surrounding society? How have the religious perspectives come to show in politics? Comparisons of the work within the Christian parties in Europe can be done, with reference to discussions and actions concerning religious and ethical issues etc.

How do you regard technical inventions as radio, film and television or sports, which might become competitors for people's interest? They might contribute to changing people's norms and beliefs. In our days one can consider the opinions about homosexuality. How have the churches and revival movements regarded the discussions about membership in the European Union, the EU? Threat or possibility? In this context one can look at the reactions concerning different alcohol customs and alcohol legislation, which is a sensitive topic in the Nordic countries.

What about the differences between generations? What kind of renewal is coming from the young people and why do they leave earlier ingrained perspectives and ways of life? What are the changes a manifestation of? It is of great importance to look at what part the women have played, in renewing or preserving older perspectives and ways of life.

In our days it is also important to examine how the many immigrants and their churches, Islam for instance, adjust to completely new conditions, for example in the way of dressing and concerning food prohibitions. What about alcohol, drugs etc.? How are the new religions, such as Islam, regarded and received by the established churches and by the man in the street, for example in connection with the building of Mosques which has been topical in Sweden? The Nordic countries and Europe are on their way to become multicultural on the religious level as well, in a completely different way than before.

One field of research which is suited for international comparisons through the SIEF, concerns the significance of religion in cultural meetings across borders of different kinds, and those conflicts and forms of cooperation that may arise. One can consider open conflicts in countries like the former Yugoslavia, or Northern Ireland. What role does religion have in that kind of contexts, alongside with for example ethnical and national factors?

Religion and politics do not have to be opposed as during the Soviet era, but may also be linked to each other. Christian political parties have on the one hand played an important part in both local politics and national politics in the western world, concerning presenting and realizing religiously founded convictions, and they still do. What does it mean that they also have, and have had governmental responsibility as in Norway at the end of the 1990s?

How is, on the other hand, the religion used as a tool in the struggle for political power between different population groups? One does only have to think about the antagonisms on Northern Ireland or in the Balkans. The ethnologist and folklorist Klaus ROTH from Munich has shown the negative political effect that the defeat of the Christian Serbs in Kosovo in 1389 against the Muslim ottomans has had concerning the political development and war situation in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. The oral tradition about the war defeat in the 14th century has contributed to strengthening the will to war and conflict between the population groups several hundreds of years after the occurred events (ROTH 1994). What looks like religious antagonisms may in fact have a political motivation. The main interest for the folklorist is the role religion plays for common people within different groupings and not just within the political or religious elite.

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POLITICS AND FOLK RELIGION: CONCEPTS AND PROBLEMS

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Abstract: The paper deals basically with the mutual interference of politics and religion. It gives a short historical overview based on European and Hungarian examples and tries to shape the dominance of them in different ages and fields (heretic movements, Reformation, Counter-Reformation, spiritual movements, Christian politics, political Catholicism, etc.). It describes how religious symbols or quasi-religious symbols can be/are used in politics as expressions for social and power efforts. It is dealing with the role of religion in nation-building in the past and present, with the role and formation of religious parties, of national and political myths. Politics has an important role in the re-christianization of Europe in the last decades, which can be observed not only in the post-communist countries, but elsewhere in Europe, too. Politics, political movements and ideologies (e.g. feminism) influence the everyday life of churches, causing debates and conflicts in governing church institutions. Religious movements can express and symbolise new ambitions and interests of given social strata and they can institutionalize, handle and conduct social conflicts (e.g. veneration of Jesus Heart). Religions and churches play an important role in the post-revolutional transition of Eastern Europe. Religion can legitimize social effort, can express national(istic) thoughts, conflicts (e.g. former Yugoslavia, Armenia, today Romania, Northern Ireland, Scotland) or social tolerance (Switzerland, today Hungary, etc.). Religion has played an important role in colonialization, having built new traditions, protecting given efforts and interest. But religion played an important role also in decolonialization. Religion can be a basis of social pillarization also in the age of secularization. Secularization processes in the late 20th century politics are no de-sacralization processes at the same time. Secular movements, because they need legitimation, use signs, symbols which often can be found in religious symbolism (communist movements and parties, neo-pagan movements, etc.). The paper tries to interpret the secularization process. In my interpretation it is a privatization process of religion(s) and as result of the process emerges an individual/invisible religiosity.

Keywords: politics, religion, folk religion, religious movements, religious symbols, religion and society, secularization, individual religiosity, Eastern Europe, Europe

Politics and religion. Phenomena seemingly very remote from each other.

Politics and folk religion. The difference between these appears to be even greater since 'folk religion' is generally much more weakly institutionalized than 'religion' in general, which, through its institutions, may have links to the institutions of politics and through the movement of the social structure may also be part of the processes of social change.

I would like to give a general overview in the light of our Conference of the links between these two areas, their problems and concepts as a possible approach to the topic.

The research is supported by the research project No. T 026494 OTKA (National Scientific Research Fund).

What is politics? According to a synthesis of the various interpretations, politics, is the sum of actions and institutions aimed at obtaining the decisive, leading roles (dominance) within small and large communities and between communities, in other words, at winning power, and at retaining it, and expressing and representing interests. The views on the methods for obtaining, using and retaining power are expressed in ideology (GEERTZ 1994a; ZENTAI 1997: 26–29). Politics is thus a special area of social relations and is specifically characterized by the manifestation of power and prestige. Politics needs, or may need, religious legitimation (MOL n.d.: 117). Behavioural constraints operate in the actions of *homo politicus* and abstract words, views, opinions and convictions, myths, fears, desires and aggressions, wills, role expectations and social norms are also present. All this represents *a scheme of interpretation* on which people base their actions (EDELMAN 1972: 31 cited in SZABÓ 1998: 113; ZENTAI 1997: 11).

This symbolic interpretation of politics appears relevant for the problem chosen as the theme of our Conference, rather than other possible interpretations (semantic, pragmatic, rhetorical, and communicative-discursive). Putting this in the simplest terms, everyday phenomena, events, expressions and things not only mean something but also acquire 'significance'. That is, they become special vehicles of meaning. The use of symbols is a widespread phenomenon at all levels of political life. It is sufficient to think of the *material* symbols (badges, coats-of-arms, buildings, posters, etc.), the *actions* (demonstrations, elections, political celebrations, conflicts and their management, etc.), and the *conceptual* language used, all of which are condensed signs, always referring to something else as well. The symbols also contain emotions and wills. Their main function is to *integrate* and *orientate* (SZABÓ 1998: 95). Their use is very strongly linked to culture (SZABÓ 1998: 96). Politics must provide an answer on the nature of the world order (good – bad, self images and other-images), the legitimacy of power, the resolution of conflicts and shaping the future image of groups affecting the whole of society or forming part of the society. (ZENTAI 1997: 12).

This is similar in content to the *religious scheme of interpretation of the world.* Important features of political myths include *simplification, personification* and the *bipolar attitude.* Practically the same determinants are found in religious interpretation too (SZABÓ 1998: 111 ff.). However, phenomena can only be interpreted in the given cultural context. They have a strong *emotional charge.*

What is religion? Most definitions of religion are based on the distinction between the supernatural and the natural. In other words, on a distinction between the sacred and the profane. But the texts, objects, persons, actions, institutions, etc. of religion(s) operate within a social structure.

Religion deals with sin, death and the fragility of public life. It pulls towards principles, virtues, ideals, and perfection. Politics, on the other hand, demands compromise, civility, secularity, and plurality. How then, are religion and politics to be related? They are not to be separated, as classical liberal theory implies, nor are they to be collapsed into each other, as theocratic or civil religion models propose. Rather, they are to interact at their overlapping and moving borders.

And what is the folk religion that figures in the title of our Conference? The definitions of folk religion found in the history of science can be divided into several groups. 1. "Folk religion is the totality of all those views and practices of religion that exist among the people apart from and alongside the strictly theological and liturgical forms of the official religion." (YODER 1974: 14). This definition is largely followed in the Hungarian literature too by Sándor BÁLINT. (BÁLINT 1987: 10). 2. According to others, the religion of the 'people' is the religion of social groups far removed from the mainstream of official church and social processes (BRUNVAND 1996: 620). 3. The concept of folk religion as opposed to the culture of the elite is especially popular among a group of social historians and historical anthropologists. (BURKE 1985; for a critique of this see: FREITAG 1991). 4. Leonard Norman Primiano calls folk religion 'vernacular religion' and, like the first group of definitions, defines its content quite broadly. "Vernacular religion draws attention to religious beliefs, practices, and experiences as they are understood, undertaken, and expressed by all people, modern and traditional, urban and rural" (BRUNVAND 1996: 620). The opposition that appears in this definition is between an ideal of religion – the institutional, codified, set form of religion – and religion as experienced (BRUNVAND 1996: 620–621).

Seen in historical perspective, there is a wide range of countries where the religious phenomenon plays an important role (e.g. Israel, tribal states). The papers dealing with India at our Conference (Hiriyanna, Korom) show the important organizing role of religion in the life of tribes and castes, the leading role of the priesthood in directing particular tribes, the use of local cults in everyday life, or the conscious use made of religious and quasi-religious symbols in the political activity around elections in regions with many different religions and many different cultures. In other countries religion played or plays a relatively small role (former USSR, socialist countries). This has also been the case historically. According to HUNTINGTON, the tensions are found along the differences between civilizations that are also determined by religion (HUNTINGTON 1998; also cited by KALLSCHEUER 1996: 23; BARNA 1998). This view also lies behind the history of philosophy conceptions on Central Europe (BARNA 1998; LENDVAI 1997). Multiethnic co-existence based on religious tolerance is less popular, less accepted today. (KALLSCHEUER 1996: 18). Besides, this could only be achieved where there was a relative balance of peoples and denominations, that is, where none was in a position of dominance over the others.

The appearance of religion and the supernatural in politics can be observed in three areas: 1. government may be based directly on religion, as in a theocracy, 2. religion may give legitimacy to the power of the ruling elite, 3. religion may support the structures, formations and traditions that can be manipulated by those in power (LEWELLEN 1983: 66). The papers presented at our Conference are about this too, particularly the latter area.

According to researchers of religion one of the characteristics of social happenings of the past two centuries and the present time is that religion and its institutions are occupying an ever smaller and more marginal place in the social structure. This

is the process of secularization. It seems to me that one possible approach to the link between 'politics' and 'folk religion' is in essence the interpretation of the process of secularization.

One basic question in connection with the secularization of recent centuries is: what is the role of religion in today's western society and what cultural forms has it assumed? While in the modern world religion has gradually become a 'private affair', withdrawing to the area of the private sphere, globalization as an important cultural and economic process has transformed the whole society into practically a 'global village'. What role has been played and can be played by religion in this? Does it act within the process or remain outside it? Is it really true that religion basically operates outside the social structure? Is this why researchers on society and culture in Hungary, for example, devote little attention to religion?

It does in fact seem that religion and its institutions are in a marginal position in the structure of today's society compared to the dominantly secularized institutions.

It can be said that the concept of individualization appearing in secularization, and the concomitant values of human rights, freedom, participation in the economic and political processes, and social justice all expressed in the concept of democracy coincide with the basic Christian notions of sacrality and human values and have been incorporated into the general European religious culture. On the other hand, while proclaiming the moral autonomy of secular political activity, politics recognizes that political culture has religious links (KOKOSALAKIS 1993: 135). The process supported by European Christianity shaped the demand and right to the private sphere (CASANOVA 1996: 188). Examining the religious changes in Hungarian society of the 1980s, Miklós TOMKA, sociologist of religion, was able to describe two related processes: 1. secularization, and 2. a process of de-secularization, that is, when religion emerges from the state of repression and rebuilds its institutions, permeating a part of social/political life (TOMKA 1988: 76). In the former socialist countries behind the Iron Curtain, the churches were practically the only stable ideological and organizational institutions during and after the political change. This is why their significance grew in the course of the political changes. As a result, a religious revival could also be observed in Hungary and elsewhere (KALLSCHEUER 1996: 19). In the world freed from the domination of totalitarian ideologies and marked by increasing individualization and privatization, the pluralism of values and interests was also manifested in the adoption and/or creation of numerous new religious communities and movements (see: BARNA 1999).

These findings can also be regarded as my paper's points of departure.

In modern societies religion is present in the social structure to a far less extent than it was in earlier societies. At the same time, it is an increasingly accepted opinion that religion cannot be considered only in its institutionalized forms. We know from practical experience that the 'religious' is present even without social institutionalization, as folk religion, as new religious movements, as individual religiosity or desacralized rites, etc. In short, religion cannot be restricted to its institutionalized forms. Examining German politics and the religious dimensions of political culture in the 1980s, Rolf SCHIEDER wrote that religious symbolism was returning to politi-

cal life and the world of political discourse (SCHIEDER 1987: 294 ff.). The same thing can be seen in Hungarian politics in the 1990s. In 1990–1994 our first democratically elected government consciously built on this language of religious symbolism, while in 1994–1998 the socialist (in reality returned communist) and extreme left-wing liberal coalition rejected this at the level of social discourse, although it supported its own power with quasi-religious symbols. The present bourgeois liberal and conservative parties which have been in power since 1998 consciously accept – although with differing emphases – both religious legitimation and the use of 'political religion' drawing on Christian traditions.

What then is religion? Religion can be conceived in general (and from the anthropological and perhaps also sociological viewpoint) as a dynamic cultural phenomenon, the embodiment of values, contents, feelings and symbols (MARTIN 1978: 13, – cited in KOKOSALAKIS 1993: 136). In this symbolical cultural interpretation, religion is directly linked to the fundamental existential interpretation of human conditions, to the notions people form of justice, freedom, good and bad. (KOKOSALAKIS 1993: 136; GEERTZ 1994b). The values accepted by society are often personified. The saints, individuals practising Christian virtue to a heroic degree, offered in the past and present life models that should or could be followed. In politics, too, there is a kind of secularized 'cult of saints' directed at political leaders, founders of parties, etc., which bears many of the external signs of religious cults. Various 'values' and interests are manifested in this, becoming patterns to be followed or simply ideal types. This can be seen very strikingly in the 19th–20th century workers' movement and in the 20th century totalitarian ideologies (celebrations, portrayals, 'cult of relics' – mausoleums, etc.) (See KORFF 1976). A similar cult emerged after the death of Princess Diana (see Marion Bowmans' paper in this volume), and appears on the anniversary of her death. The different sets of values are present in everyday life as alternatives and people are attracted or repelled by them. In essence, such debating (religious and profane) sets of values are reflected in the political rhetoric of the Norwegian home mission (see Amundsen's paper in this volume).

According to Durkheim and Weber, the causes of changes in religions must be sought in changes in the structure of society. In this view, the marginalization of religious institutions reflects the decline of religion in society. But is this really true?

In the western world the magical conception of the world and the power of priests/churches have, in fact, declined in significance. But ideologies, including here the 18th century Enlightenment as well as those related to democracy in general, have never lost their metaphysical underpinnings. For they are based on faith and hope. Rationalism itself can never be purely rationalist (KOKOSALAKIS 1993: 137). In other words: besides a rationality of purpose *(Zweckrationalität)* there also exists a rationality of value *(Wertrationalität).* According to the Weberian conception, even behind the entirely rationally interpreted, governable conception of the world, there must be a unique quasi-religious logic and characteristic. And even if ideology and religion are not the same thing, they are very closely related. The organization of modern economic life, the system of political institutions and social life is not based

only on rationality and rationalization. These processes cannot dispense with the essence of religion either. In this way modern society shapes its own religious processes and forms. (KOKOSALAKIS 1993: 138).

The question is: if religion remains in today's society, what is its social form/manifestation, and how are these forms related to the system/structure of society? Despite the existence of a process of secularization, it can be said that in recent decades religion has not ceased to exist, it has not yet disappeared even in the developed western states and democracies. Indeed, we can observe a kind of revival of popular religion, as well as various forms of new religious movements, charismatic religions (see BARNA 1999), occultism and New Age phenomena (KOKOSALAKIS 1993: 139) which are being further strengthened by the mood of waiting for the end of the world that surrounds the millennium. A distinctive religious transformation is taking place at subjective level (KOKOSALAKIS 1993: 139).

At the end of the 1960s (1967) Thomas LUCKMANN wrote his book titled 'Invisible Religion', in which he regards religion as a comprehensive anthropological category. He concludes that in modern societies religion has shifted from the collective level and consciousness, to the subjective and private sphere. In other words, Luckmann noticed that religion in the modern age has broken away and escaped from the social system (KOKOSALAKIS 1993: 139). But this detachment is only one of appearance. Just as there is no personal language, so we cannot speak of a strictly only private/individual religiosity. Or another example, individual liberty can only be a product of collective work – in other words: can only be collectively secured and guaranteed (BAUMAN 1997: 7). Luckmann's theory of 'invisible religion' is based on the assumption of a crisis of the institutional apparatus, [but] seems to be applicable only in certain cases, and does not destroy so-called church religion (CIPRIANI 1984: 30).

Church religion was able to strengthen beside individual religion.

In the 1980s and 1990s there has been an increase in the political significance of religion and religious fundamentalism. It became a decisive factor in conflicts in the Middle East, in the contradiction between Jews and Islam, and in the strengthening of fundamentalism in Iran, Afghanistan, Algeria and Dagestan. It is continuously present in Europe, in the Yugoslav conflict, and also in Transylvania where the Romanian Orthodox Church does not wish to relinquish its dominance as the state religion. The 'democratic' government is still not willing to return the properties confiscated at the beginning of the communist period from the western Christian churches (Greek Catholic, Roman Catholic, Calvinist, Unitarian), but continues to support Orthodoxy. Another dimension lies behind this: the structuring and strengthening of the national identity.

All this indicates that the individualization and privatization of religion has not taken place, or not in the way that certain theoreticians believed they could see in the past decades, even though the theory of the privatization of religion is in line with the essence of western cultural development which gave the individual sovereign status. But this sovereign individualism became general and generally institutionalized in the western societies. One of the stimulants of modern individualism

was Christianity itself (KOKOSALAKIS 1993: 140). At the level of community politics, personal religion is much more closely related to the feeling of democracy itself, and to the demand for individual and community autonomy and identity. Consequently, religion was able to return to the community arena at the level of both liberal and conservative politics. This can be seen in the political activity based on Christian values, and in the vigorous spread of new Christian movements from the USA to Europe and the whole world. This process can be strengthened by the growing dominance of Islam present in European societies to a growing extent, generating some kind of collective Christian response (KOKOSALAKIS 1993: 141). This can be seen in the democratic political life being reorganized after the world-wide collapse of totalitarian atheistic regimes (from Russia through Albania to Cuba). This is why CIPRIANI, on the basis of the Italian example, proposes introduction of the concept of 'diffused religion' (CIPRIANI 1984).

The privatization of religion is definitely related to the question of collective cultural and political rights and permeates society (CIPRIANI 1989, also cited in KOKOSALAKIS 1993: 141). In practice this means the spread of various forms of popular religion. The generally prevailing view is that modernity and popular religion are incompatible concepts and mutually exclusive aspects of social reality. There can be no doubt and it can be observed everywhere that the mediaeval magical thinking has basically lost its significance, but below the surface, there has always been a great variety of popular religion which was either tolerated or rejected by the institutionalized church and the state. An example in Hungary is the movement of Marian priests, the charismatic movement.

To a certain extent these social phenomena have in turn influenced theological thinking. While in the 1960s and 1970s the church wanted to modernize and 'demythologize' religion, from the 1980s the aim was to stress the link between moral and religious values. The efforts of the church and religion for modernization and rationalization in a way resembled the similar efforts made in the 19th century, that is, to suppress popular religion, strengthen ecumenism and curb the cult of Mary and the saints that was weakening it. A striking example of this is the practice observed in the 1990s in organization of the church feast in Szeged Lower Town (See PUSZTAI 1999). Here, on the feast of the Blessed Lady of the Snows, in 1997 for example, there was no mention of the veneration of Mary, of the feast of the Blessed Lady of the Snows and its symbolical content, the organizers did not allow the small groups representing popular religion still present sporadically to have a say, but instead ~ involved them immediately in the organized and official liturgy (mass, adoration, litany). This obvious tension led to a shrinking of the previously wide region from which this place of pilgrimage had attracted pilgrims and it became of local significance only.

The strong feminist movements that emerged parallel with the growth in the role of the individual brought the application of feminist viewpoints in all areas. While this is not yet the case for Hungary, in most countries of Western Europe feminist theology, a feminist interpretation of the Bible, etc. are no longer unaccustomed phenomena. The social/political movement has in turn influenced religious

thinking and theology. One sign of this was the strengthening of the veneration of Mary and the female principle that could be observed in the Swedish Church. I saw that portrayals of Mary are appearing in more and more Protestant churches, a sign that women want to play a role in the church, too. Another sign is the ordination of women as ministers in a number of Protestant churches (England, Germany, Hungary, etc.), giving rise to many debates and splits within the churches concerned. The paper presented by Katarina Lewis deals with women's roles and presence, with the confrontation between the Christian and modern conceptions of society in the Swedish Lutheran Church, the conflict between traditional female social roles and modern self-fulfilment. Under different social circumstances, for example in former Soviet Karelia, the role of women increased and it became their task to defend and pass on the faith, and to spread anti-communist, anti-atheist and anti-technology propaganda in their own families. This increased role of women declined after the political change and the male-centric church image strengthened again. Leonard Primiano writes about the religious practice of homosexual and lesbian believers, people the church previously did not know where to place.

The rapid changes that have occurred in the lives of individuals and small and large communities (emigration, changes of political regime = changes in the set of values), or the recurring economic crises of our times can also cause psychological insecurities. These demand a kind of religious security. Margaret Mackay speaks in her paper of the role played in the past and present by Calvinist hymns as a vehicle and expression of values. This psychological insecurity is probably also a factor behind the strengthening of religious fundamentalism. The growth of religiosity in the various forms of popular religion can certainly also be of political significance at different levels, even if these forms are not part of the political structure of society. A number of papers deal with these aspects: the institution of monarchy, the link between civil religion and folk religion (Rowbottom), a distinctive religious practice and way of life developed under the totalitarian atheist autocracy (Küllős). Thus, despite the marginalization of religious institutions and the obvious autonomy of the basic institutions, religion and popular religiosity also appear in socio-economic and political contexts (KOKOSALAKIS 1993: 142).

It seems to me that the introduction of the concepts of 'civil religion' and 'political religion' and the interpretation of their phenomena is a relevant formulation of this duality. The idea of civil religion reaching back to Rousseau is also reflected in the opinion of many of today's researchers. Although BELLAH's book on the USA contains no definition of religion, J. A. COLEMAN gives one, namely that civil religion is "a set of beliefs, rites and symbols which relates a man's role as citizen and his society's place in space, time and history to the conditions of ultimate existence and meaning" (cited by BRYANT 1995: 149). BRYANT adds to this that civil religions must set out the proper relationship between (civil) society and the state in securing a society's place in space, time and history.

The concept of 'political religion' arose in the context of the policy of modernization and nation-building, especially with regard to Africa and the Soviet Union. Christel LANE sees differences between the two kinds of religion. While 'civil reli-

gion' connects the political order to a transcendent power such as God, 'political religion' simply presents a sacralization of the political order. 'Civil religion' confines itself to the political order, whereas 'political religion' claims authority over all social life (BRYANT 1995: 150). Among other differences, it can be mentioned that in contrast with the historical roots of civil religion, the phenomena of political religion often belong to the area of invented tradition. One can generally agree with the statements of LANE that civil religion is celebrated in societies where the individual is dominant, and political religion where the (party-)state seeks to impose itself (LANE 1981: 44; BRYANT 1995: 150). Civil and political religions include political rituals, 'the rites of rulers'.

RELIGION AND IDENTITY

Globalization, the general development of the market economy and the collapse of the socialist systems have revived not only the private sphere, but also the question of individual and communal identity, as a contrary process and one occurring principally in a religious and cultural context (KOKOSALAKIS 1993: 136). The uneven secularization of the European societies resulted in a culturally dialectic process between politics and religion, and in the continuous restructuring of religion and the social structure, ethnic and religious identities. There is a tension between the particular and the universal in this process. This is also a central problem of Christianity.

In the wake of Durkheim we can regard the link between religion and identity as axiomatic. Due to the close intertwining of religion and ethnic identity, secularization is less strong in a number of European countries, such as Ireland, Poland, Greece and Malta, than elsewhere in Europe. In multicultural and multireligious regions, religious and ethnic identity may become intertwined. One such region is Ireland where the Catholic religion distinguishes the Irish (CECIL 1993; MACDONALD 1993), or in Moldova, Romania where a section of the Hungarians have become Romanianized in their language but have not abandoned their Catholic religion.

The close intertwining of ethnic and religious identity on the one hand, and ethnic separation on the basis of religion on the other hand can be seen in the Yugoslav conflict. Where those speaking the same language can be distinguished on the basis of religion, they have their own culture and consciousness. Saša NEDELJKOVIĆ speaks in his paper of the link between religious and national identity. He analyses the conflicts in the attitudes towards cosmopolitanization, individualization and the religious/historical traditions present in university life. However, people following the same religion but living in different language communities may differ because of the different cultural background, historical and social factors, or a different interpretation of history. (For example, the differences between Italian and Ukrainian Catholics living in Australia. – LEWINS 1978).

In this way religious and national identity can become intertwined. In certain

cases religion can help in shaping the nation (e.g. the Rusyns discussed by Bertalan Pusztai in his paper), or in the symbolic expression of a separate ethnic/cultural identity, as in the case of the Roman Catholic Hungarians living in Moldova. Religion is also intertwined with Europeanness. It seems to me that in political life today the political idea of the European Community is in a way a reformulation of the unity constructed (also) on a religious basis in mediaeval Europe. And while the European world is strongly secularized, even if to differing extents in the individual countries, Christianity can nevertheless be found as an ideological support behind the aspirations for European union. But there are debates over whether Europeanness extends to Eastern Christianity, to Orthodoxy, or remains within the confines of Latin Christianity, Roman Catholicism and the Protestant churches which grew out of it, excluding Eastern Christianity from the union. In my opinion there are not only differences of ecclesiastical administration, history, rule, liturgy, etc. between Eastern and Western Christianity but also a different cultural and civilizational background and it would be difficult to bring the two into line. Current official Roman Catholic aspirations stress the overall Europeanness of the two trends. As a symbolical expression of this, in 1981 Pope John Paul II made Cyril and Methodius, too, joint collective patron saints of Europe (ROBERTS 1998: 195–198). This dilemma also finds expression in the proposed process of expansion of the European Union.

Others see in supranational Christianity accepted as the foundation of the European cultures, a force extinguishing and ending national and ethnic specific features. For this reason, in structuring their present national identity and providing it with an ideological underpinning they reach back to reinterpreted and reconstructed forms of pre-Christian local religions and symbols. The use of archaic religious and historical symbols is one of the main ideological tools of the various forms of nationalism. I agree with the study of Agita Misäne and Torunn Selberg: in Europe (Baltic and Scandinavian countries) neo-paganism assumes mainly its Protestant form. I am not able to see clearly why this should be so, since such movements are also present, among others, in Poland and Hungary (WIENCH 1998).

Today's attitude towards life and everyday religious feelings are strongly influenced by the approaching end of the millennium, something experienced by only a few generations in the history of mankind. Opinions and notions in this connection are largely built on religious symbols and ideas of past ages related to the end of the world, the thousand-year reign of Christ and the Last Judgement. People experience a general deterioration of the world in their everyday lives: wars, natural catastrophes, crime, corruption, hostility to the future (=refusal to have children), sexual licentiousness. They see all this as the result of globalization and the individualism that is strengthening parallel with it. Religious and ethnic fundamentalism is appearing as a counteraction. This attitude is often the basis of disillusionment with Christianity and the turning towards pre-Christian cults already mentioned.

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In the opening paper I tried to outline some theoretical questions of the chosen topic of our Conference and its timeliness. What is politics? What is religion? Are there tensions, separation, or interdependence, interference, mutual influence, or co-operation between the two phenomena?

How can the questions raised be answered from the angle of the relations between politics and folk religion? The papers to be presented in the coming days will throw light on many details. However, we can say in general that the similar, symbolical expression of interests and values makes the spheres of politics and religion related fields, and the forms of symbolical expression/behaviour are to a large extent similar or identical. Precisely because of the more or less overlapping fields of interest and values, the forms of symbolical behaviour and the ritualization of actions can also be similar. Moreover, the secular authorities often gain or believe they have gained transcendent legitimation from religion, from the different forms in which religiosity is manifested and, in the final analysis, from reference to God.

On the other hand, examples of the links between national identity and religion show that religion, the religiosity of everyday life, the system of religious symbols, the values represented by religion/denomination have the symbolical power to shape communities, that is, they can join and strengthen people in their self-identities, self-awareness and their sense of communal belonging. In other words, in its operation religion also acquires immediate social/political significance. This is true in everyday religious practice, in the shaping of historical consciousness, and in the interpretation of religious and national conflicts. In both past and present politics and folk religion are interrelated phenomena that permeate and influence each other.

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STRATEGIES FOR RECHRISTIANIZATION. POLITICAL RHETORIC OF THE NORWEGIAN HOME MISSION IN THE 1920's[1]

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Abstract: The paper discusses the strategies and the rhetorical elements of the Norwegian Inner Mission during a period of political and cultural conflict – the 1920's and 1930's. Special attention is paid to understanding the ambivalence between premodern values and modern strategies as they were expressed by one of the leaders of one of the inner mission organisations, professor of theology Ole Hallesby (1879–1961). In his thinking, the explicit aim of the inner mission activities was the rechristianization of Norway, the means were actions organised according to the modern society, but the cultural and social ideal was the non-secularized, premodern Norway – as opposed to urban pluralism. Probably, this ambivalence made the inner mission strategy a political failure.

Keywords: pietism, religious organisations, inner mission, national revival, secularization, modernity and premodernity

Norway has never been dominated by strong, aggressive free churches. Instead, the Norwegian Lutheran State Church – established in its present shape by the Constitution of 1814 – became the fundament for most strategies in order to explicate religious values, formulate religious protest or secularize the civil society. Even today, most Norwegians belong to the Lutheran State Church.[2]

However, during the 19th century, several autonomous religious *organisations* were established within the State Church. These organisations for the most part were dominated by different kinds of pietist ideology and puritan models for religious life. Their aims could be multiple, and cover for instance both foreign mission, home mission and social work. A national *Foreign Mission Society* was established in 1842, and in 1868 a parallel society aiming at national home mission was organised, the so-called *Luther Foundation*.

During most of the 19th century, these religious organisations within the State Church were interesting combinations of working strategies and social structures that were both modern and premodern. Evidently, the very fact that the two national

[1] This article is based on my paper "Vennene og vekkelsen. Hallesbys signalement av indremisjonskulturen" (1999, in press).

[2] There are, unfortunately, very few general presentations of the Norwegian church and religious history in foreign languages. Information of a certain relevance and value for the period described in this article is, however, to be found in GJESSING 1911, Die Kirche von Norwegen 1936, and HASSING 1980 (on Methodism and popular revivals in the 19th century). Certain aspects are also dealt with in THORKILDSEN 1996. A short survey is presented in MOLLAND 1957.

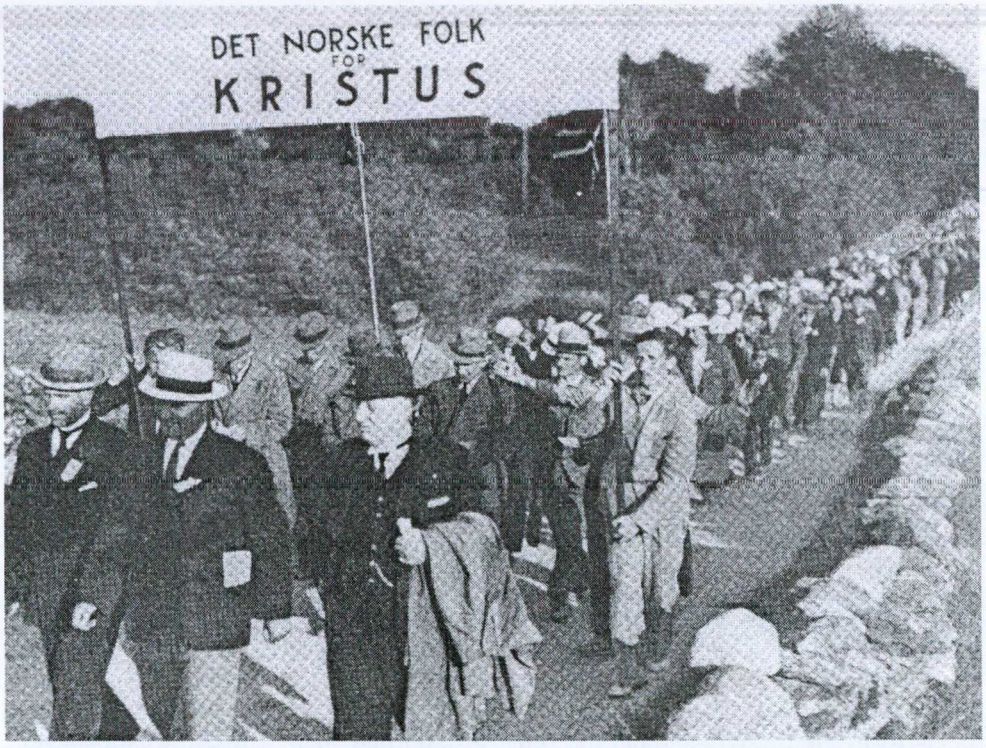

Fig 1. This picture shows what is called "Christian Youth" marching for an out-door meeting – probably in the late 1930's. Not all the participants look specially young, but they are correctly marching – under the slogan "The Norwegian People for Christ" (Repro: Arthur Sand, Oslo)

societies were *organisations*, was a modern phenomenon. So was the fact that they were founded by non-experts, laymen and laywomen as opposed to the ministers and formally educated religious experts. But at the same time they settled in local societies, and were restrictive as to the participation of women preachers, and this made clear that the organisations also referred to premodern values and standards.[3]

THE NORWEGIAN HOME MISSION OF THE 1850's

This rather strange combination of modern and premodern elements also in several ways was decisive when the leaders of the Norwegian home mission, the *Luther Foundation*, formulated their views on contemporary society and the aims of

[3] A recent and very broad investigation on the religious movements in Norway c. 1780–1920 is FURSETH 1999.

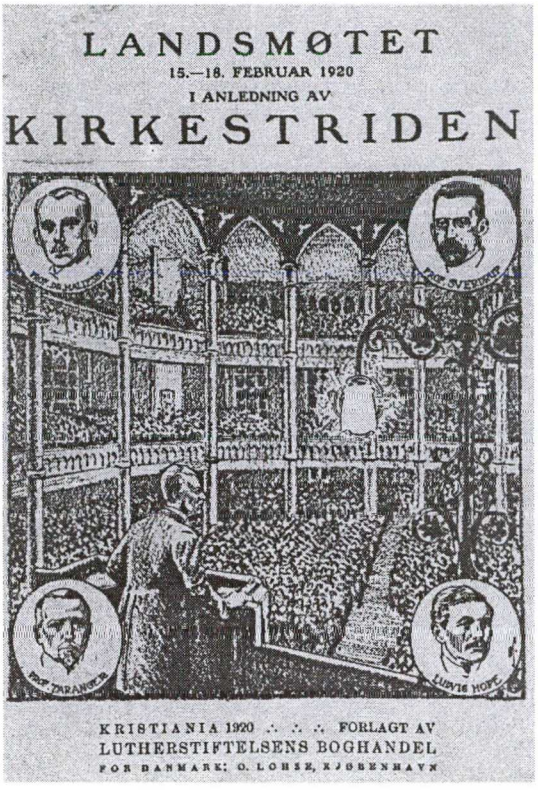

Fig 2. This is actually the cover of the book presenting the official reports from the important meeting in 1920, when Ole Hallesby was among the spokesmen for a non-cooperation policy against the liberal among the Norwegian clergy. The picture shows the dimensions of the meeting. Hallesby's portrait is in the upper left corner (Repro: Arthur Sand, Oslo)

the inner mission as such. The explicit argument put in favour of establishing a formal home mission organisation was that a religious crisis had developed. During the 1850's and 1860's, Norway was dominated by several religious revivals, and it was the leaders of these revivals who actually became the leaders of the new organisation. But what was the content of this alleged religious crisis? It seems that many of the religious leaders thought that the effect of the growing Norwegian industrialism, capitalism and migration was that the moral and religious standards of the old society were seriously threatened. The obedience to God, to the Ten Commandments, to the authority of the Bible, so established in previous times, no longer was a commonly accepted fact in society. And why was that so? The spokesmen of the early home mission argued that one main point simply was that modern people did not accept authority as such, they wanted to decide for themselves, to make more money, have better lives and personal freedom. This was the cultural and social content of the postulated religious crisis. And how could this crisis be overcome

according to this critical religious view? The assumption of the inner mission leaders was that a crisis like this only could be neutralized by using the weapons of the modern society itself. One had to use modern media like newspapers and public discussions, it was necessary to *organise* the Inner Mission activities, and to do it just like the expanding workers and burghers did when they expanded or sought to have support in favour of their demands and interests. The problem was, of course, that the use of modern strategies in order to establish the moral and religious codes of the premodern society could easily turn out to be both ambiguous and arbitrary. This was fully understood by the Norwegian home mission leaders of the 1850's and 1860's, and they tried to establish their society as some sort of an *ad interim* organisation. We need this organisation just now, they said, but it is not meant as any kind of a permanent structure. Let us use *The Luther Foundation*, the inner mission society as an instrument for distributing bibles and new testaments, let us also use it for administration of lay preachers all around the country, for collecting money and for controlling and centralizing public discussion – as long as it is needed. But when we have reached our aims and the Norwegian people has once again returned to the old standards of moral and religion, this organisation actually will no longer be needed.

Of course, neither as a strategy nor as an ideology this was acceptable and realistic. But I find it very interesting as a starting point for the organisation: The organised Norwegian inner mission was from its beginning in the 1850's and 1860's identified by what one perhaps might call an intrinsic ambivalence: It was aiming at re-establishing old, premodern values by using modern strategies, and was left with some kind of a scepticism towards its own methods.

A REORGANISED SOCIETY IN 1891

The Norwegian society changed dramatically during the second half of the 19th century.[4] Industrialism, capitalism and migration had come to stay. The cities were rapidly growing, the social differences between the classes became more clear, and political conflicts threatened the stability of the society. In 1884, parliamentarism was introduced as the only way of stabilising the growing political conflicts. As seen by the home mission leaders, however, the religious crisis became more of a permanent crisis than could have been foreseen twenty years earlier. So, in 1891, the *Luther Foundation* was reorganised and made a permanent, modern, nationwide organisation under the name of *The Norwegian Home Mission Society* and with the aim of making Norway a Christian society. The instruments of this reorganised society were as follows: A national network of professional lay preachers was established, and the new organisation was installed with three levels – the central committee in the capital, the regional boards, and the local boards. The fundament of the whole organisation, however, still was the local assemblies of what usually was called "the

[4] A survey on 19th century Norway could be found in HUBBARD et al. 1995, esp. Chs. 6–7.

friends" or "the spiritual friends". These small groups were formally organised, and many of them built their own houses, usually called "houses of prayer" (in Norwegian: "bedehus"), where the meetings and assemblies of the friends were situated two, three or more days of the week.

And the work went on. There were quite a few revivals on local, regional and national level, but the Norwegian society kept changing. Even more people moved to the cities, the religious movements did not grow as fast as planned, while other popular movements expanded – both socialists, unions and teetotalists established themselves as central political forces.

A NEW GENERATION OF HOME MISSION LEADERS

In this situation a new generation of leaders took over the Home Mission Society. Both were theologians, and one of them was also a minister. In 1912, the minister *Johan Martin Wisløff* (1873–1944) was appointed secretary general, or executing leader of the organisation, while dr. *Ole Hallesby* (1879–1961), professor of theology at the recently (1907) established *Free Faculty of Theology* in Oslo, was appointed head of the board. In cooperation, the two new leaders immediately started to point out new directions for the organisation.

In a series of articles in the Home Mission's periodical, professor Hallesby during the autumn of 1912 made some main statements of his policy. We have one central aim, he declared, and that is to *rechristianize whole Norway*. Secularisation, atheism, godless propaganda and modern heathendom are all threatening to make our country a new spiritual wilderness, and our people a people without culture and values. In a situation like this we cannot just sit down and observe or regret what is happening; we have to act, and act according to an explicit and conscious strategy. What is, then, the hope of Norway? How is Norway to be rechristianized? Our aims can only be achieved by means of a total renewal, a *national revival*. And how could a national revival be organized? Professor Hallesby here launched a slogan that was to be heard for several years to come, at that was: "Fill the institutions!" By this, he meant that the best way to open up for a national revival, a full rechristianization of the Norwegian society, was to place severe Christian believers in central positions all over the society.

But this was not all. Professor Hallesby also thought that the Home Mission had to show the way, by establishing its *own* institutions, especially schools, for young people, for teachers, for lay preachers, for craftsmen, for farmers. Furthermore, Hallesby suggested that the new times were in need of Christian hospitals, charity institutions, educated and full-time lay preachers employed by the Inner Mission and new "houses of prayer" where different kinds of activities could take place. During the following years, the Home Mission spent a lot of money founding and funding these kinds of schools, institutions and houses all over the country. Another point was, according to Hallesby, that the internal strategies had to be refined. The local Home Mission groups, "the friends", had to modernize, to become more effective

Fig 3. Professor Ole Hallesby in his later years, probably the 1940's or 1950's. Beware of the golden cross hanging on a chain: The cross as sign of victory – and repentance (Repro: Arthur Sand, Oslo)

and expansive. He invited the local "friends" to establish Sunday schools, clubs and choirs for young boys and girls, family groups for the young, Christian couples and so on. Within a few years, the Home Mission organisation had become highly differentiated both on central and on local level.

This very expansive strategy was in fact not stopped until the Second World War. And the success was remarkable and astonishing. There is no doubt that the Inner Mission became a vital and central cultural, social and political power in the Norwegian society, a position clearly demonstrated by the rebuilding of its headquarters in the Norwegian Capital. In the 1930's, the Home Mission built a modern complex of hotel, offices, administration centre and assembly hall close to the Royal Castle in Oslo.

POLITICAL AIMS WITHOUT POLITICS?

How is this to be characterized, this far? Beyond doubt, the new Inner Mission strategy conceived by professor Ole Hallesby represented a further modernization not only of the organisation but of the strategical thinking. Provoked and threatened by the emerging political and moral popular organisations of socialist and teetotalist

origin, and obviously inspired by their effectivity and success, the Home Mission leaders both wanted to stand up against these godless tendencies and tried to imitate their strategy and ways of working. While the socialist organisations tried to take over the established social organisations and to win national and local elections, Hallesby tried to establish alternative, Christian institutions. Only by publicly demonstrating that the Home Mission organisation was capable of competing with rivalizing, non-Christian organisations, there would be possibilities of the great national awakening or revival to come. Hence, it is not hard to see that Hallesby's strategy was a political strategy and a strategy of competition: The fight was over the souls of all Norwegians, and the fight had to be won by either godless political parties or by a Christian organisation.

It is, however, interesting to observe that professor Hallesby and the home mission leaders very seldom were talking about politics in direct terms. On the contrary, Hallesby most often speaks about politics and politicians in terms of contempt or marginalization. There is, he often says, a safe way to go if one is to destroy the innocence and deeper culture of a people, and that is the way of politics. Politics is conflict, hatred and destruction put into system. On the other hand, Christian faith – as expressed through the inner mission ideals – puts together what a degenerated, godless and restless society has taken apart. Christian faith makes the individual free and restores the god-willed institutions in society based on the authority of God's own word. As a consequence, Hallesby is very sceptical about true Christians being politicians or engaging for instance in workers unions. There is, he says, only one important thing in life, and that is the struggle for The Kingdom of God to come, to make the old and well tested values of Christianity accepted as the fundamentals of society – in short: The struggle for full rechristianization, not political parties or higher wages, is the first and only obligation for true Christians.

THE REVIVAL OF IDEOLOGIES

Hallesby's and the Home Mission's great era, in fact, became the mid-war period, the 1920's and 1930's. This was a period, even in Norway, of extensive political rhetoric. It is, then, very tempting to underline only this dimension of what was said and what was done. Indirectly, the Inner Mission made puritan and pietist Christian culture a question of political alternatives or exclusive choices, and – for instance – created effective barriers between religion and socialism, or a rather negative attitude among Home Mission members to political activity. And further, it is quite easy to understand why the Home Mission strategy had to turn problematical: It was – after all – not linked to distinct and common social or cultural values that could be accepted by others than the Home Mission's own members. Therefore, the rechristianization rhetoric created a dividing line between believers and non-believers. Only Home Mission members themselves dreamed about The Great National Awakening; to others, this awakening seemed the purest night-mare. Second, compared with for instance the Socialist Party, the workers' unions or the

Teetotalist Movement, the Inner Mission Society was of limited force both economically, socially and rhetorically. The public competition – if there ever was one at all – was between David and Goliat, and the point here is that David might have had a just case and all heavens blessings, but he still was the youngster and Goliat stayed a giant.

– OR THE IDEOLOGY OF REVIVALS?

But this is not all. Until this point, I have mostly been concerned with leadership, public strategy, official rhetoric and direct political implications of the work of the Inner Mission and professor Hallesby in the 1920's. But since this is a Conference on ethnology of religion, there should of course also be a question of culture and people here. Professor Hallesby was not the only member of the Home Mission, although he was conceived as – and indeed he understood himself as – the eloquent and undisputed leader and chief of the organisation. Hallesby, however, was in many ways a wise and experienced man. Since early in the century, he had himself been travelling as a lay preacher (he was in fact never ordained as a minister), hoping for revival and awakening. He knew his supporters, and he was a very intelligent interpreter of their culture and ways of thinking. In a very interesting book from 1928 – published as a celebration of the Inner Mission's 60th anniversary – professor Hallesby addresses the ordinary members of his organisation. The book is called *From the Working Fields. A Few Words to the Friends of the Inner Mission*.[5]

Of course, Hallesby has to make statements of his ambitious strategy here, too. But in a strange way, these ambitions seem to fade away, and instead, he starts to talk about the individual soul, the local communities of "spiritual friends" – without money, with no eloquence or strong organisation, left only with confusion, despair, and a small hope of the grace of God. The book as such is less a selfsufficient presentation of the rechristianization program than a modest and sympathetic sermon to troubled individuals.[6]

What "the friends" actually long for, Hallesby says, is not necessarily obvious success or external accept, but a local revival and a warm, friendly acceptance at the local "house of prayers". And he gives lengthy descriptions not only of how nice and fruitful these close and warm religious communities could be, but also of the simple and severe religious communities of former days, at the countryside, when the premodern innocence still dominated people's bodies and minds.[7] The warmth of the friends and the fire of the revival is also the fire and the warmth of the past. Why do we need all these organisations, educated preachers and effective administrators? Hallesby asks. In fact, he continues, the strength and the center of genuine religious

[5] The Norwegian title of the book is *Fra arbeidsmarken. Et ord til indremissionsvenner*.

[6] It is possible to get at least a certain impression of Hallesby's way of thinking on these matters through some of his translated books, e.g. HALLESBY 1934 and HALLESBY 1996.

[7] On central traits in 19th century conservative Norwegian pietism, cf. AMUNDSEN 1997 (a).

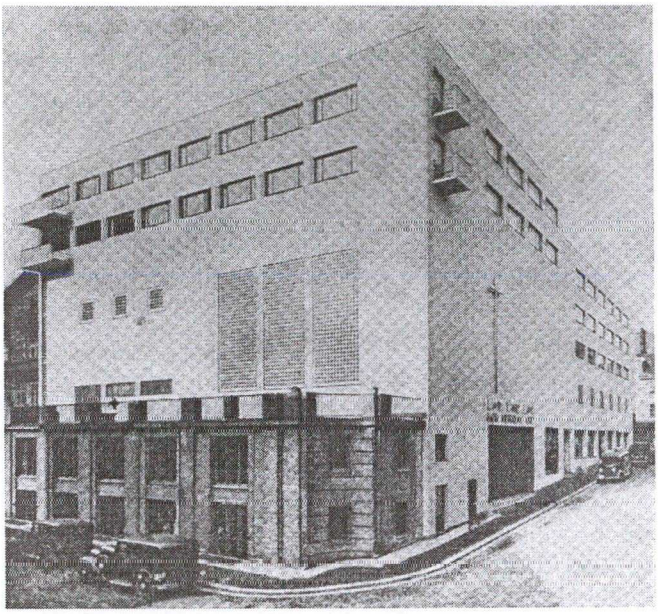

Fig 4. The headquarters of the Norwegian Inner Mission Society as it was presented after a major rebuilding in 1935 – in the center of the Norwegian capital, Oslo (Repro: Arthur Sand, Oslo)

life is the local community of friends. If this community is well-functioning, pure and without conflicts, a mild and quiet revival *will* come. How it starts, will be unknown to us, and whereto it will take us, is impossible to guess, Hallesby further says. In these passages, Hallesby's rhetoric is of another kind than in the public speeches and debates. Actually, it almost seems as if the "friend"-rhetoric is contra-factual to the modernized "Great-National-Awakening"-rhetoric. The "friend"-rhetoric is both nostalgic and, partly pre-modern, but it is hardly occupied with the new movement strategy at all.[8]

THE PROBLEM OF THE 'REMOVED CANDLESTICK'

And there is even more to it. Having placed the centre of all religious life in Norway among the local group of friends, who actually needed no organisation to experience revival, Hallesby goes even further. Why does this quiet, serious, local awakening still not appear? he asks his readers. Is it perhaps because you have not repented – every one of you? Does the community of friends, the "house of prayer", house hidden sins? In this central passage he is kind enough to quote a very impor-

[8] On the nostalgic character of the Church's view on its own history, cf. AMUNDSEN 1997 (b).

tant verse from the New Testament, a verse that belongs to the central *topoi* in the revivalist culture, i.e. The Book of Revelation, chapter 2, verse 5: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of this place, except you repent."

This, I think, is the ultimate, inner box, the rhetoric of the rhetoric in the inner mission culture. Still in the process of building up an effective and powerful religious organisation, professor Hallesby also reveals the weakest – and perhaps also the most sympathetic – element of this culture: its almost immense introspection and individualism.

As seen from outside, this is the weakest point of the whole project in the 1920's and 1930's: not the lack of funds, members or political support, but *the religious ideology itself*. What Hallesby actually was saying – and I think that this was a point shared by most of his home mission "friends" – was that there will be no rechristianization, no common success, no Great National Awakening – unless every one of you show up a clean heart, a pure mind, a warm hand. Inner Mission may not need formal organisation or educated preachers, but it cannot do without every single "friend" – "repenting, and doing the first works". If there were no "friends" with these genuine qualities, God himself may "remove the candlestick from this place". Perhaps Norway was condemned? Perhaps the darkness of godlessness, politics and conflicts was the actual future – because of the "friends" themselves?

THE IRONY OF THE 'SECULARIZED CANDLESTICK'

If I am right in interpreting professor Ole Hallesby like this – and, in fact, I think I am right here – I would like to point out that this is a conclusion of a certain relevance to the main theme of this Conference, "Politics and Folk Religion".

I have tried briefly to describe the historical and rhetorical conditions and traditions in a specific European country in the inter-war period. It was a period when in many countries political and religious movements were in serious conflict over social values, political power and control of public institutions. In a Lutheran and even pietist tradition as the Norwegian, there seem to have been made strong efforts to make local, popular religion a fundament for strong revival movements aiming at taking spiritual control over the whole country. In one perspective, professor Ole Hallesby is a significant case here. Local pietism and communities of "friends" were parts of a strong popular religiosity almost all over Norway at the time, and Hallesby and the Home Mission leaders tried to make them stand up against socialism, political conflicts and godlessness.

On the other hand, there are central elements in the very pietistic and revivalistic ideology that make such political and cultural efforts difficult to sustain. Pietism is, indeed, expansive and authoritarian, but it is also extremely individualistic and self-critical. Professor Ole Hallesby was well aware of this, and he explicates it quite clearly in dialogue with all his inner mission "friends". Thus, he also openly shows

that pietistic strategies for rechristianization in a pluralistic community have to fail, at least when compared with uni-linear, power-seeking movements of a more distinct secular origin. While the pietistic "spiritual friends" of the 20th century always have feared that "the candlestick" might be taken away from them, the secular, political movements have grasped the "candlestick" and taken it to *their* place.

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THE PEOPLE'S PRINCESS: VERNACULAR RELIGION AND POLITICS IN THE MOURNING FOR DIANA

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Abstract: The death of Diana, Princess of Wales, on August 31st 1997, led to extraordinary activity by millions of people as they reacted to the news in unexpected and seemingly unprecedented ways. Among the most fascinating phenomena were the many notes which were left for, about and to Diana, at the many 'shrines' which sprang up around Britain.

This paper will explore the multivalent nature of these notes – the extent to which they reflected folk belief about sainthood, heaven and divinity; the extent to which they were political comment veiled in the conventions of mourning; the extent to which they were either magnifications of common vernacular practice or a new development within it.

These remarkable documents were both personal and communal, public and private; it could be argued that they give a unique insight into popular religiosity in Britain at the turn of the Millennium.

Keywords: vernacular religion, death of Diana, Princess of Wales, folk belief about sainthood, letters to Diana

The scenes in Britain in the days after the death in a car accident of Diana, Princess of Wales, on 31 August 1997 were extraordinary. It was a 'liminal' period when republicans mourned a princess, royal behaviour was both criticised and dictated by the people, profane space was made sacred; and tradition was evoked, adapted and invented. The purpose of this paper is to explore the ways in which popular belief, practice and politics intermingled and found expression at this time, and to contextualise some of the religious and spiritual activity reported on and observed then.

Many magazine and newspaper columns, and numerous books, popular and scholarly, have been written on 'the Diana event'. However there was not one 'Diana event', there were many complex inter-related 'Diana events'. These Diana events were multivalent; they had different meanings for different people, both actors and observers. While it is not possible here to describe all the events in detail and review all the commentary,[1] I want to draw attention to certain incidents to see what can be learned from them about popular politics, folk religion and contemporary spirituality in Britain.

[1] See WALTER, ed. (1999) for a broad-ranging collection of academic papers on the events following Diana's death.

THE PEOPLE'S PRINCESS

Lady Diana Spencer, a descendant of the poet Edmund Spenser who wrote 'The Faerie Queen', had been the late twentieth century's fairytale princess – beautiful, kind and caring. As sociologist Tony WALTER points out, in an era of constitutional monarchy, 'every royal personage must appear both royal and yet ordinary, almost divine yet almost human' (WALTER 1999: 26). This Diana managed extremely well. Her glamour and beauty underlined her difference from the ordinary; her medical and marital problems stressed her humanity but endeared her to many; her perceived closeness to divinity was expressed in the readiness of mourners to declare her a saint or an angel on her death. In short, Diana 'out-royaled' the royals; she came to be thought of by many as the 'real' royal from whom other members of the Royal Family should learn. O'HEAR claims that what Diana stood for was 'the elevation of feeling, image and spontaneity over reason, reality and restraint' (*The Week*, 25/4/1998: 12).

The death of Diana was announced early on Sunday 31 August 1998. At breakfast time the recently elected Labour Prime Minister, Tony Blair, was interviewed. In this interview he used the phrase 'the people's Princess' which was to become an important motif throughout the Diana events.

At the time of the accident, which occurred in Paris, the Royal Family including the Queen, Prince Charles and the two young princes William and Harry were on holiday at Balmoral, the Royal Family's remote country estate in Scotland. There was therefore to some extent a lack of focus; Diana's body was in France, and the Royal Family were in Scotland. In the absence of personal contact, people turned to two empty buildings associated with and to some extent symbolising Diana and the Royal Family respectively, Kensington Palace and Buckingham Palace (see DAVIES 1999).

Among the most remarkable (and photogenic) scenes after Diana's death were the sheer numbers of flowers deposited in London outside Kensington Palace and Buckingham Palace, outside cathedrals and churches, and at war memorials and other public places throughout England.[2] Messages and tributes to Diana, photographs of Diana, candles, balloons, toys and assorted personal belongings were also left at such sites. Books of Condolences appeared at Kensington Palace and Buckingham Palace, at civic buildings such as town halls, in cathedrals and churches, in Harrods (the prestigious London store owned by Mohammed Al Fayed, the father of Dodi Al Fayed who also died in the accident), in supermarkets and elsewhere.[3] Technological innovation enabled 'virtual' books of condolences to proliferate on the Internet.

[2] I should make clear at the outset that I am a Scot (Scottish father, English mother) living in Bath, England; my personal experiences of and research into the Diana events were therefore based in England.

[3] One noticeable change of 'custom' in the aftermath of Diana's death seems to be the use of the book of condolence. When a young woman was murdered in the Bristol area, for example, a book of condolence was immediately set up in the Methodist church with which her family was connected.

There were extraordinary scenes on the day of the funeral. Crowds lined the route of the funeral procession, many having spent the previous night on the pavement to ensure a prime position. The funeral service was broadcast to the masses outside the Abbey and an estimated audience of 31 million throughout the UK. After the service, people gathered to watch and throw flowers onto the car that transported Diana's body to her final resting place on an island in the grounds of her ancestral home.

PEOPLE POWER

It is important to remember that the Labour Party had fought an election in May 1997 against a Conservative government that had increasingly been seen as out of touch, hard-hearted and hypocritical. Much of the rhetoric of the election campaign had been phrased in terms of the 'the will of the people', the need for the 'voice of the people' to be heard, and the desire to create a more caring, inclusive society. After the election, Labour could present its victory as a victory of the people.

So, there was an awareness of and a taste for 'people power' in the summer of '97. And what happened was that 'the people', or to be more accurate, some people, those who became 'Diana's people' wanted to show respect and they wanted others to show respect too. Many have commented on the fact that there was a sort of coercion into a show of mourning more appropriate to the Victorian era than 1990's 'cool Britannia'. Britons who were not caught up in what was being portrayed as 'national grief' felt alienated and spoke of a 'fascism of grief', or 'the touchy-feely fascists'. Popular notions of appropriate behaviour in relation to the dead, to the Royal Family and to the nation were expressed and to some extent enforced. What happened was both an appeal to and revival of tradition, as well as the adaptation and in some cases the overturning of tradition.

THE STATE OF THE NATION

Another important aspect of the Labour victory was its election promise to pursue devolution for Scotland and Wales. Many, Labour supporters included, felt this might irreversibly change the nation and possibly lead to the break up of the United Kingdom as we know it. So we must also be aware that there was already an agenda of reflection on the nature of Britain and the state of the nation. Moreover, the changing face of Britain, which is now a multi-cultural and religiously plural society, was apparent in the Diana events. Messages and flowers were left and condolence books were signed by Britons of all descriptions. However, for all the newspaper talk of 'the nation united in grief', a number of events were curiously under-reported: the fact that many people, Muslim and non-Muslim, flocked to Dodi Al Fayed's grave; the fact that a London Muslim group distributed food to those camped outside Westminster Abbey on the night before the funeral; the fact that a multi-faith re-

Fig. 1. Shop-window shrine in Bath

membrance service was held in Bradford. Different understandings of what constitutes 'the nation' were articulated (consciously or unconsciously) and although the language of inclusivity was often invoked this was not always demonstrated in the reporting. The title 'England's Rose' for Diana, for example, is demonstrative of that ambiguity; some would read there England meaning Britain, others would not!

'THE ROYALS DIDN'T DESERVE YOU'

Both the Royal Family and the capital city, London, are considered national symbols (I need hardly add that this is a particularly English perspective). The absence of the Royal Family from London, as they continued their holiday, became an increasing source of comment and criticism in the tabloid press that claimed to reflect the views of the people. Being out of London was equated with being out of touch with the people.

At the heart of the matter was the fact that the Royal Family was seen to be behaving unlike the people. There was a great irony in the fact that whereas in the past the Royal Family, exemplified by Queen Victoria, had set the standards for elaborate mourning, the people were now dictating how the Royal Family should express their grief. The continued presence of the Royals at Balmoral and their apparent aloofness from the extraordinary scenes of public mourning became the focus of increasingly negative comment. Tabloid newspapers called on the Queen to come back to London to 'lead the nation's grief' and 'show us you care' (DAVIES 1999: 8). The Royal Family was being judged by the standards of the people, and also by the standards they felt had been set by Diana – the people's princess, the caring princess.

A variety of traditional methods were employed to show public disapproval of the Royal Family's behaviour in relation to Diana's death, and also of their treatment of her during her lifetime. There was the use of humour, as in the following examples:

> Prince Charles was out walking the dog the other day. A passer-by said 'Morning', Prince Charles said 'No, just walking the dog'.[4]
>
> Why was Elton John invited to the funeral? So at least one old queen would be seen crying in public.

The messages with the flowers, though mainly expressing affection for Diana and sorrow over her death, were also used as vehicles for criticism of the Royal Family:

> The Royals didn't deserve you. You showed the world what 'Royalty' is all about (MONGER and CHANDLER, 1998: 107).

While most messages were addressed to Diana, some were actually directed at the Queen: 'Why did you treat Diana so badly? You should be ashamed.' (MONGER and CHANDLER, 1998: 107).

A good example of 'people power' in relation to appropriate behaviour concerned the flying of the Royal Standard over Buckingham palace. It is the practice that the Royal Standard flies over Buckingham Palace when the monarch is in residence there; when the monarch is not there no flag is flown. At the time of a royal death, the Royal Standard still flies, as a sign of the continuity of the crown. Meanwhile, in ordinary society, it is common practice to fly a flag at half-mast as a sign of respect when any national figure dies or there is an occasion of local or national mourning. Thus, after Diana's death, what is considered Britain's national flag, the Union Jack,[5] was flown at half-mast on public buildings – but not, of course, at Buckingham Palace. The absence of any flag on Buckingham Palace, and particu-

[4] This is a play on the words 'morning' and 'mourning', which sound very similar.

[5] It should be noted that the Union Jack contains symbols of England, Scotland and Ireland, but not Wales.

larly the absence of the Union Jack at half-mast became the focus of increasing comment and irritation in the popular press. The explanation of the royal tradition concerning the Royal Standard was not deemed good enough. Ultimately, the people 'won'. On the day of the funeral, the Union Jack flew over Buckingham Palace at half-mast; the palace had to conform to the wishes of the people. Royal tradition was overthrown, and the people's view of appropriate behaviour was reinforced.

What some people did was to tap into the civil religious behaviour of what Anne ROWBOTTOM (1998) calls 'the real royalists'. As ROWBOTTOM has pointed out, when people flocked to London bearing gifts (primarily flowers but also photographs and other hand-made items), when they queued patiently, when they waited for hours to be in a good position to see the funeral procession pass, they were acting in the ways 'traditional' for civic visits by Royalty and other Royal occasions (some of the people who spent the night on the pavement in order to get a good view of the funeral procession had done the same for Diana's wedding 16 years earlier). The need to do something resulted in part in doing the done thing in relation to monarchy.

As ROWBOTTOM has also pointed out, the study of civil religion and constitutional monarchy has been comparatively neglected, and many academics and journalists of republican persuasion tend to regard royalists as cranks and fanatics (this undoubtedly came through in the surprise and distaste expressed by some academics and journalists at the time). However, the confused and confusing nature of the relationship between the British and the monarchy (and perhaps particularly the English and the monarchy) needs further examination as it plays a vital role in Britain's 'folk politics' and notions of nationality.

OFFICIAL AND FOLK RELIGION

Religion and politics are interlinked in a situation where there is a state Church, with the monarch as its head. The Queen's role as Head of the Church of England came under some scrutiny in the light of some of the negative comments being made about the Royal Family's treatment of Diana. A message taped to the railings of Hyde Park read

> 'Dear Diana,
> My dear you have been treated very badly by a family connected with my church' (MONGER and CHANDLER, 1998: 107).

One vicar wrote to *Church Times*, the newspaper of the Church of England:

> Sir, – I suspect that I am not alone in being thoroughly ashamed that the name of the Princess of Wales was dropped from the State Prayers a year ago. Presumably it is too late for an apol-

> ogy to be made, but a lesson can be learnt: Lambeth should not automatically bow the knee to the commands of Buckingham Palace. (12/9/1997, No 7022:9).

The role of the Anglican churches and cathedrals in the aftermath of Diana's death and the fact that she was given 'what was effectively a state funeral in the Church of England' (DAVIE and MARTIN, 1999: 188) highlighted the ambivalent relationship between the people and the state church at a time when Anglican church attendance in England is said to have fallen below 1 million on an average Sunday. One writer to the *Church Times* felt that the church could learn from Diana:

> The Church is now at a crossroads: either she can become more isolated and out of touch with ordinary people, or she can take the message Princess Diana brought to the people, which is one of acceptance, love, forgiveness, and understanding.
>
> The fact that many who do not usually attend church came to mourn and to worship this weekend shows that people still identify with the Anglican Church at such times. It is not too late for the Anglican Church to accept the people of this new generation gladly (12/9/1997, No 7022: 9).

If folk religion is 'the totality of all those views and practices of religion that exist among the people apart from and alongside the strictly theological and liturgical forms of the official religion' (YODER 1974: 14), there can be no doubt that folk religiosity was enacted and displayed in myriad forms after Diana's death. In a 1998 survey of Anglican clergy in Somerset, replies in answer to the question 'What aspects of Folk Religion do you encounter?' included 'Cult of Diana'.[6] The messages left with the bunches of flowers tell us much about popular ideas of good and bad, of sainthood and of the afterlife. Many messages declared Diana instantly a 'saint' or an 'angel' and implied that she would continue to be in touch with people (particularly her sons) from beyond the grave. (It has been reported that one four year old whose mother died was told by his aunt that 'his mother has gone to Heaven to see Princess Di'.[7]) There was also the assumption that Diana and Dodi Al Fayed would in some way be reunited: 'May you have as much fun in heaven as you did in St Tropez' (MONGER and CHANDLER 1998: 107). Though neither was overtly religious in conventional terms, it was assumed that both Diana and Dodi would find a place in Heaven, Diana because of her compassion and Dodi because he had made Diana happy.

[6] I am indebted to Geoffrey Walker, for this information, taken from his doctoral research on clergy attitudes.

[7] Personal communication from Gillian Bennett

SHOWING RESPECT

While many commentators at the time stressed the uniqueness of the Diana events, scholars have pointed out comparisons such as the outpourings of public grief at the death of Queen Elizabeth I, Princess Charlotte (aged only 21 at her death in 1817), Queen Charlotte (the estranged wife of George IV) and Prince Albert (WOLFFE, 1999). Moreover, in the addition to the growth of roadside memorials in Britain, there had also been scenes of mass public mourning after such events as the Hillsborough tragedy and the King's Cross disaster, when public spaces had become communal sites of respect and remembrance (MONGER 1997). There was thus an historical tradition as well as a newly developing repertoire of how to behave in the face of tragedy, individual and communal, to draw on. Above all, two strong popular impulses emerged after the death of Diana – the need to do something and the desire to show respect.

Although the formal mourning dress and rituals of the Victorian era are long gone, folk ideas of appropriate behaviour in relation to death came to the fore. Some revived the largely defunct tradition of wearing a black armband. Many adapted this and reflected the recent use of the red ribbon loop to commemorate AIDS victims by wearing a loop of black ribbon. A particularly subtle show of respect was made by the proprietor of a rather elegant clothes shop in Bath, who for the day of the funeral changed her window display so that only black clothes were featured, in sharp contrast to the colourful, summery arrangement of the previous week. When 'proper' behaviour was neglected, 'the people' (i.e. Diana's people) were quick to admonish. In Bath, for example, there was criticism when blue pens were initially provided for people to sign the Condolence Book at the Guildhall. Black pens were deemed proper and were swiftly provided.

Many shops were closed on the day of the funeral, and notices appeared in their windows which were variations on the theme 'Out of respect for Diana Princess of Wales, this store will not open until 2.00 pm on Saturday 6 September'. It was interesting that this was thought a fitting way of showing respect, in an age when older conventions of shop closure have increasingly been challenged by commercial pressures. This was commented upon by a cartoon in the satirical magazine *Private Eye* (12 September 1997) which featured two drawings of the same shop, the left-hand one with a sign in the window which read 'Closed out of respect for Princess Diana', the right-hand one bearing the sign 'Good Friday – Open as Usual'.

Many commentators remarked on how 'un-British' it all was. What clearly came as a surprise to many was the apparent outpouring of emotion from the nation that perfected 'the stiff upper lip'. However, although the media tended to concentrate on and project images of emotion, the overwhelming impression of many who were in the places where crowds gathered (such as Kensington Gardens) was of subdued quiet, calmness and respect. Indeed, Douglas DAVIES has pointed out that far from being un-British

Fig. 2. Flowers and messages for Diana in Bath

> The British habit of forming a queue ... came into its own as people made very long queues over many hours to sign books of remembrance. It was a kind of sacralizing of queuing (DAVIES, 1999:13).

SHRINES

One of the best demonstrations of continuity and change in relation to folk religion, I felt, was provided by the 'shop window shrines' (BOWMAN 1999). These were window displays that typically included a picture of Diana, flowers, candles or any combination thereof. In Bath, one upmarket shop had arranged a small table covered in a white cloth in its window in a shrine-like fashion. Raised up at the back of the table was a large frame containing a very informal photograph of Diana and below it printed in white on black the words from the Elton John song Candle in the Wind: 'It seems to me that you lived your life like a candle in the wind, never knowing who to cling to when the rain set in'. To the left and right in front of the frame were unlit white candles in elegant glass candlesticks with two tiny birds on the edge, and covering the table a large formal flower arrangement of white flowers and green foliage, white lilies predominating. (See illustration). Propped up in the window of a Bath cafe was the cover of a magazine, featuring a very happy, informal picture of

Diana with her hands clasped as if in prayer, alongside which was a large blue glass jug of white and pale yellow flowers on the right, and a flowering pot plant on the left. A small city-centre flower shop window had a photograph of Diana wearing a tiara, placed between two formal white flower arrangements. There seemed to be some consensus about what flowers were most appropriate for such public display. One florist reported that several people had bought flowers to put in their shop windows:

> "We've been selling a lot of white lilies," said Kit Pace, of Pulteney Bridge Flowers.
>
> "Traditionally, lilies are a mourning flower that is associated with church" (*Bath Chronicle* 6/9/97: 15).

My local newsagent and video shop had in its window a glass vase of white lilies, with a lighted white candle to its right, and on the window a word processed 'poem' to/ about Diana. The manageress of the shop had come in at 5.00 am on the day of the funeral to set up the arrangement, as a show of 'personal, private respect' from the staff who 'never had time to go off and say a prayer or sign a condolence book'. The manageress said 'We all wanted to do something. When someone dies, you want to show your sorrow in some ways, don't you?'. When I asked about the candle , she responded that everyone lights candles for someone who has died. As a florist's daughter, she knew that lilies were the 'right flower' but she also added that lilies are simple and uncomplicated and whatever people say about Diana 'she was a simple flower that blossomed into something fantastic'.

Among the most artistic of the shop window shrines was that of Jacaranda, a local flower shop. Soft white material was draped down and across the left side of the window and lined the base of the display. The centrepiece was a large glass vase of white lilies, and on the vase handwritten in capital letters, green ink on white A4 paper DIANA OUR THOUGHTS ARE WITH YOU. To the left of the central vase was another white urn shaped vase with small white flowers, in front some green foliage, to the right a small pot with a spray of white flowers, and behind that a tall green foliage plant in a pot. It looked as if considerable care and attention had gone into this display. The owner had done the display on the Sunday that Diana's death was announced. It was, he said, 'my tribute in my taste, my way of showing condolences'. He thought of the candle 'like you go into a church and put a candle for someone, it was like that.' People had come into Jacaranda and thanked him for doing the display.

The shrines for the most part appeared in shops that were privately owned and/ or small scale businesses. Those involved were able to do something publicly to express respect through the medium of their shop windows – although they all described their acts as 'personal' or 'private'. These shrines were created more formally than the outdoor shrines and tended to draw more on what was perceived as 'traditional', with for example the use of flowers and candles being self-conscious echoes of what would be expected in church. However, these shrines were not in

church. Profane space – the shop window on the busy street – was transformed into sacred space, by the people, for the people, to show respect for the people's princess.[8]

VERNACULAR RELIGION AND CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUALITY

While much of the Diana activity drew on traditional notions of appropriate and/or respectful behaviour, largely derived from Christian folk tradition, Britain's increasing religious pluralism and the growth of individualised spirituality needs to be taken into account. It is here perhaps more helpful to talk in terms of vernacular religion, defined by PRIMIANO as 'religion as it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret and practice it' (1995: 44). Away from the photogenic piles of flowers, there was a considerable amount of vernacular religiosity being articulated, at least some of which can be related to developments in contemporary spirituality in Britain which include the growth of pilgrimage, both the revival of old (pre-Christian and Celtic and/or medieval Christian) pilgrimages and the creation of new ones; the revival of customs, Christian and pagan (such as rag wells and well-dressing); the increasingly diverse use of what are regarded as sacred sites; the ritual creation of sacred space; a blurring of religious boundaries; and 'believing without belonging' (BOWMAN 1993, 2000).

I have already referred to the influence on the Diana events of conventional popular behaviour in relation to royalty, the growth of wayside shrines and the scenes of public mourning after the Hillsborough tragedy. However, much of the behaviour in connection with outdoor shrines was reminiscent of pilgrimage (CHANDLER, 1999), with prized possessions (e.g. a favourite record, items of clothing) being 'offered' to Diana. Notes were addressed directly to Diana, candles were lit, all-night vigils undertaken. As one reporter commented, 'It came as little surprise that some of those mourners, waiting through the night, believed they saw visions' (*Country Life* 11/9/1997, Vol CXCI, No 37: 82). There was undoubtedly a sense of 'liminality' and 'communitas', to use Victor Turner's terms, among mourners. Some of the shrines created around trees, with scarves and other items hanging from the branches were very reminiscent of rag wells, such as one recently 'revived' at Glastonbury (BOWMAN 2000). The 'collage' or 'mix and match' approach of contemporary spirituality was very much in evidence.

It is worth noting that while public space – such as Kensington Gardens – was converted to sacred space, large numbers of people flocked to the nation's cathedrals to light candles, regardless of denominational or religious affiliation. Religious buildings were taken over to some extent not just by laity, but by those whom the

[8] It should be noted that a shop window shrine appeared in the window of Harrods both immediately after the deaths of Diana and Dodi in 1997, and on the anniversary of their deaths in 1998.

custodians would normally regard as non-believers. Although thousands of candles were lit at Wells Cathedral, for example, one cleric there felt that while the act of lighting a candle to some extent 'exorcised' or gave expression to people's grief, it frequently arose from a generalised sense of 'spirituality' which observably did not signal any renewed commitment to the church. People were often simply regarding the Cathedral as 'a place where the numinous or spirituality resides'. I was struck by that fact that two pagans of my acquaintance, women used to creating and officiating over their own rituals, felt it appropriate to go and light candles in Winchester Cathedral.

PAGAN AND NEW AGE PERSPECTIVES

There were distinctive perspectives on the Diana events in Pagan and New Age circles. One ingenious explanation of Diana's popularity, which both explained her appeal and the extent to which the Royal Family were out of touch and out of favour with the public was expounded to me by a Druid within 24 hours of Diana's death (BOWMAN 1998). He claimed that Diana Spencer was of the ancient British royal bloodline, and that her 'arranged marriage' to Prince Charles had been engineered to reintroduce this ancient bloodline and legitimise the House of Windsor. The British people had warmed to Diana so much because they instinctively recognised that she was truly royal, their 'real' monarch. He claimed that one reason that so much had been made of her touching people was that Diana had the gift of healing, the Royal Touch.[9] Moreover, he pointed out that if Prince William christened William Arthur and born on the summer solstice, was to follow the ancient custom of the king using his second name, he would become King Arthur. Thus, through Diana, the ancient British royal bloodline would be restored to power, with a new King Arthur for the new millennium.

Just as many had identified with Diana through their own medical or marital experiences, an editorial in the Samhain 1997 issue of *Pagan Dawn* (the magazine of the Pagan Federation in Britain) referred to 'the way in which Diana was hounded and vilified by the media', adding

> 'As Pagans we have become used to seeing a similar denigration of Paganism in its many forms by contemptible editors who play with the public's fear of what they do not understand'. (No. 125: 3).

The editorial also said of Diana's death:

> 'It was an event which seemed to many of us to evoke some deeply buried spirit in the people of the United Kingdom, and per-

[9] The 'Royal Touch' was the tradition that English and French monarchs were able to cure disease, particularly Scrofula, by touching the diseased person.

> haps even the world. ... As Pagans, many may see parallels with stories of the goddess Diana, or perhaps the Arthurian mythos.' (1997 No 125: 3).

Meanwhile, *Kindred Spirit* ('The UK's Leading Guide for Body Mind and Spirit') considered it 'fitting' to devote five pages of the Winter 1997/98 issue to readers' 'tributes to the People's Princess', 'especially as Diana was a strong proponent of complementary therapies' (41: 53). One self-identified 'spiritual teacher' wrote

> In recent weeks I have been privileged to experience what I feel may have been the most profound and significant event for humanity, and its future, in my lifetime.
>
> The event was not, as most commentators believe, the death of Diana, but the incredible aftermath which captivated the world and brought us to what I believe is a new sense of understanding and awareness (41:53).

This writer explained how he and his wife had felt 'drawn' to go to the funeral, and to lay a floral tribute at Kensington Palace. As they mixed with the millions in London, there were

> Peoples of all colours, races, ages and religions, united, possibly for the first time, by way of a feeling. This was not about Diana. People were grieving for what they felt they had lost within themselves: compassion, love and understanding for others (41:53).

The lowering of the Union Jack over Buckingham Palace was interpreted thus:

> The monarchy, strong and immovable, had been moved: this silent peaceful revolution had started to demand and create the wishes of the whole, not the few (41:53).

The entire event was seen in terms of the ascent of humanity, 'laboriously moving through the charkas towards a spiritual union with the God-force, or 'Samadhi' (41: 54). Following the deaths of Diana and Mother Teresa, humanity shifted 'from the heart Chakra to the communication Chakra', 'verified' by Israel negotiating 'a more lasting peace in Lebanon' and Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland 'denouncing violence' and entering negotiations for an Irish solution (41: 54). The writer concluded

> I believe the greatest gift that Diana left to us was to show us our potential to restore the universal understanding and compassion for each other that can unite our world in love not hate. If we can remember how incredibly powerful we all were, and how in a week, the world was changed forever, we may just have a chance (41:54).

The 'folk political' events and the mourning following Diana's death were also analysed from a global, spiritual perspective by another *Kindred Spirit* reader:

> If her death shakes the Royal Family into the modern age and they learn from her example and incorporate universal love, as well as service, into the way they live their lives, then surely this will be a wonderful legacy for the royal children ...
>
> We can see how Diana's funeral helped many people on planet Earth to purge themselves of suppressed emotional wounds and this may be why they went 'overboard' with the floral tributes (41:57).

Drawing on the New Age rhetoric of karma, reincarnation and spiritual progression, this writer declared

> I believe Diana was an old soul; she may well have elected to die when she did – at the height of her popularity and at a time of immense personal happiness – in order for her death to have the greatest impact on us.
>
> I feel Diana's death signifies the Piscean Age rapidly coming to a close, for, as I see it, we took a quantum leap towards the Age of Aquarius when we mourned Diana's passing (41:57).

CONCLUSION

Two years after Diana's death, in August 1999, a number of newspapers were referring to Diana as the 'Forgotten Princess' and the lack of a permanent, public memorial seemed to reinforce this perception. The early euphoria of Labour's victory was perhaps wearing off and the people were possibly not feeling quite so powerful as they were in the heady days of the summer of '97. Devolution for Scotland and Wales had begun, and the future of the peace process in Ireland was uncertain.

Many of the issues raised and articulated around the death of Diana remain unresolved – the need for a more caring, inclusive society; the need for the Royal Family to both uphold and embody national tradition while remaining ready to change; the need for the British to address issues of national identity.

However, the public reaction to the death of Diana has taught us many things. As a former lecturer in a Study of Religions department that drew upon Ninian Smart's model of religion as a living organism of seven interacting dimensions (mythical, ritual, doctrinal, ethical, social, symbolic and experiential), for example, I found that the Diana events provided my students with a greater understanding of the dimensions, concrete means of articulating them from their own experience, and an appreciation of their complex inter-relationship. The Diana events also demonstrated the extent of religious pluralism in Britain, and the ways in which people who

were superficially doing or observing the same things could have quite different interpretations of what was going on. Above all, the Diana events served as a timely reminder that while the British both retain a strong degree of vernacular and civic religious beliefs and practices, new spiritual ideas and expressions are moving from marginal to mainstream. The people know how to adapt, manipulate and create tradition in the realms of both folk religion and politics.

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WHAT IS VERNACULAR CATHOLICISM? THE "DIGNITY" EXAMPLE

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Abstract: The fact of Christianity's negative attitude toward homosexual relations has not stopped a large number of gay and lesbian Christian believers from continuing to think of themselves as members of their respective denominations. In many American metropolitan settings, groups of homosexual Roman Catholics have formed a religious organisation named 'Dignity' to fulfill a need for worship and socializing.

Focusing on the Philadelphia branch of Dignity, this paper examines the reasons for the continued involvement by homosexual American Catholics in religion in general and in such an antagonistic religious institution in particular. The study of the sexual politics of this Dignity congregation has generated a new perspective which underscores the insufficiency of the conventional terminology of "sectarian," "popular," or even "official," religion for describing the vitality of lived religion. In response, I offer the term "vernacular religion" which will be explained and assessed as a new approach in the search for understanding of any given community of believers and their various categories of religious belief. The relation of the study of vernacular religion to the Philadelphia Dignity community will be discussed through an examination of its history and developments; of the negotiated beliefs of its members; and its reactions to the institutional church, and to the AIDS crisis.

Keywords: Christianity, homosexuals, homosexual organizations, 'Dignity community,' vernacular religion

At the 1999 SIEF Symposium and in this published text considering the topic, "Folk Religion and Politics," it was my desire to broaden the scope of consideration beyond the relationship of vernacular religion to the science of governmental/national politics. I wished to include as a part of our discourse the politics of religious institutions, the politics of creating theology, and the politics of sexual morality within a religious tradition like Roman Catholicism.[1]

Although the documents of the Second Vatican Council emphasize the need to understand Catholicism in much broader terms, many contemporary leaders of the Church themselves tend to reify the institution's authoritarian nature as the dichot-

[1] William WESTERMAN has delineated in a useful encyclopedia article "seven distinct but interrelated areas of folklore and folklife research" associated with the study of politics and folklore (WESTERMAN 1996: 570–574). Particularly relevant to the study of vernacular religion and its multitude of expressions is his sixth category: folk political organization and alternative social institutions. WESTERMAN argues that the ideologies of religious settlements and cooperative communities "are commentaries on existing in the face of a larger dominant culture and are creative ways to dispense with aspects of the dominant culture that are unacceptable to adherents" (1996: 574).

omy between a clerical elite maintaining rules and a practicing laity absorbing them. Of course, the hierarchy even in the process of the performance of their sacerdotal functions are also creatively negotiating their understanding of Catholicism, making it the normative understanding because of the roles they occupy as "specialists" in the religious institution. This kind of creative negotiating, it should be noted, takes place throughout the Church.

One example of negotiation within the Church that I have researched is Dignity (PRIMIANO 1993a; 1993b), the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, chapter of the "national lay movement of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered [Roman] Catholics, their families and their friends" (HELMINIAK 1996). The men and women who have banded together to form this community share with all other Catholics the intrinsic action of negotiating their religious lives. I have identified this activity of people creating their own religion as "vernacular religion." Vernacular religion, as I have categorized it, is religion as it is encountered, understood, interpreted, and practiced (PRIMIANO 1995: 44), and the members of Dignity that I have studied particularly exemplify its basic principles. For in their process of learning and sustaining their religion, these Catholics have negotiated their institutions, their beliefs, their public ritual activities, their private devotions and practices, their interactions with other believers, and their material lives including clothing, food, domestic space, religious objects, and the life of the body.

While there are many gay and lesbian Roman Catholics who continue as faithful members in traditional parish settings, some have banded together for this national organization which is composed of a number of independent regions and communities throughout the United States and Canada. Dignity/Philadelphia described itself in their 1987 Information Sheet with the following statement:

> DIGNITY/PHILADELPHIA is a chartered Chapter of DIGNITY, INC., an international movement of gay and lesbian Catholics and their friends, working within the Church for the development of its sexual theology, for the acceptance of gay and lesbian persons as full and equal members, and to elicit responsive approaches both inside and outside the entire Roman Catholic Church. (Dignity/Philadelphia Information Sheet: 1987)

Dignity has played a unique role in the history of post-Vatican II American Catholicism as one of the most successful gay/lesbian affinity groups of any Christian denomination in the United States.[2] The organization provides spiritual, educa-

[2] Dignity literature gives membership rates of 125 in 1977 and 122 in 1982. 167 members was the number stated at the Philadelphia group's Quarterly Business Meeting (16 February 1986) and 152 members was stated at the Quarterly Business Meetings (10 August and 9 November 1986). In 1989, the Philadelphia membership numbered 225 men and women, with the proportion of women in the chapter remaining ten percent or less. The Chapter reached its highest membership in 1990–1991 with 250 members. Most recent memberships rates have been lower: 190 individuals paid dues with about 11% of those belonging to women (1996).

tional, and social goals, as well as counseling services for its members. The first Dignity chapter was established in San Diego, California, in 1969. Dignity/Philadelphia traces its origins back to a series of home liturgies that began in 1973. Its existence has never been sanctioned by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, and Dignity's liturgical or business activities have never been permitted to take place on Church property. For most of its existence, the chapter has rented space in Episcopal Church halls and sanctuaries.

While keeping the issue of Catholic hierarchical treatment of and concern for homosexual persons before the institutional Church and the general public, Dignity has never broken from the institutional Church. It has retained an allegiance to Roman Catholic dogma and tradition while, at the same time, maintaining the central principle that it is not immoral for a gay or lesbian Catholic to live an actively homosexual life. Though not recognized by the institutional Church, Dignity as a lay-run Catholic community has achieved sufficient notoriety to prompt responses to their activities from both the Vatican and American Church hierarchy.[3]

Given their situation as homosexual Catholics battling with most members of the hierarchy of their Church and certainly with Vatican authorities, these Catholics have been challenged to interpret their religion to make it relevant to their lives. They consciously added to or subtracted from the Catholic faith as they understood it, and to their satisfaction. One Dignity member described this action, what he called "rationalizing" the diverse elements of his "lived experience," as the "the gymnastics of faith." Others described this practice in the same manner as did non-gay Catholics of the post-Vatican II period as being "à la carte," "cafeteria," "peripatetic," and "pick-and-choose" Catholics. Father Jake, the undesignated chaplain of Philadelphia/Dignity, highlighted this vernacular process of negotiation when he employed a dining theme to explain to me how he made decisions about his religious life:

> LNP: Now, what would you say if someone said to you that you're involved in a theological cafeteria?
>
> CHAP: That may be true, [but] what is theology? Maybe that's where it needs to be done [in] some cafeteria. Because we are talking about food and drink, whether it be intellectual or spiritual or pastoral. We're talking about feeding: take and eat, feed my sheep ... the food of life, the source of life. OK, I am [choosing] food in a cafeteria.
>
> LNP: At the same time, you're deciding that sometimes what the chef serves, you don't have to take.
>
> CHAP: And I don't have to.

[3] The most prominent statement reaffirming the Church's critical moral stance on homosexual genital activity was the "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons." This letter was promulgated in 1986 by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (See GRAMICK and FUREY 1988). See HELMINIAK (1998) and STONE (1998) for a discussion of other late twentieth-century statements by the Vatican and American bishops on homosexuality as well as the role of Dignity in contemporary Catholic discourse on same-sex relationships.

> LNP: Because you're very perfectly nourished by the foods that you're able to choose from the line yourself?
>
> CHAP: Yes, because they have all been produced by the chef. I don't have to eat everything that the chef puts out. Nor do I have to be goggle-eyed over his special dish, I might get sick. Yes, since the chef brought this out, if I was present when he produced this fantastic thing and I said could I...really have the recipe for that? And he said: oh sure, here. And then next week he decides that never ever will this food be served again, and I'm over here with the recipe saying: Tough, I liked it. And I have a good reason [for this thinking] and that is theology. We must make a distinction between theology and authority, and maintain the authority of theology.

The vernacular religious life is influenced by any number of available resources, and for Catholics the multitude of beliefs and practices represented within institutionalized and non-institutionalized Catholicism form a rich source of inspiration within the process of believing. Dignity Catholics such as its de facto chaplain were aided in their re-creation of their religion by the institutional Church itself which underscored for the faithful the importance of the primacy of conscience in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Dignity members, like many other American Catholics who disagreed, for example, with the Church's stances on sexual morality (from artificial contraception to divorce to abortion) traced the importance of conscience down through the centuries affirming the chaplain's perspective that "the ultimate right of the individual's conscience has really been maintained by the Church throughout the ages." The authority of theology that he referred to in our conversation was the primacy of his own reflections and conscience in achieving a satisfying religious life. He felt a sense of creative control over his own religious destiny, and he had no intention of relinquishing that personal responsibility. His keen understanding and interpretation of how Catholic theology worked allowed him to use the hierarchy's own instruments of doctrinal order and control to empower his religious life. This man's theological sensitivity is an outstanding example of his personal transformation of an "official" concept of Church into an experiential model suited to his spiritual, psychological, and social needs.

Dignity members like other Roman Catholics found the inspiration for their religious lives in the sacred sources, traditions, and history of the Church, as well as their personal reflections on their lived experiences. They saw their identities as religious men and women, and homosexual men and women, fulfilled in their own understanding of the Catholic faith and Catholic community. This is why they could remain within a religious tradition when the public representatives of that tradition treated them so negatively. For the same reason, both extreme traditionalists and extreme liberals, all actively gay, all Roman Catholic, all vernacularly Catholic, could be found worshipping together at Dignity.

The term, "vernacular Catholicism," is the final synthesis of my understanding of the vernacular religious process and its particular expression within the Catholi-

cism of actual believers. Vernacular Catholicism is the uniquely Catholic formulation of the vernacular religious impulse shared by all religious people. It is the way a Catholic individually expresses his or her understanding of the Catholic tradition which is the history, structures, laws, customs, beliefs, and practices of its people. Vernacular Catholicism involves absorbing, learning, accepting, changing, denying, embellishing, and appreciating the spiritual and cultural parameters of Catholicism in one's life. It is manifested by Catholic believers and evidenced within the widest range of Catholic institutions:[4] the Vatican hierarchy; the vast system of clerical functionaries throughout the universal Church; sacred environments and objects; scripture and interpretation; dogmatic pronouncements and doctrinal explanations; liturgy and paraliturgical practices including the Mass, the sacraments, pilgrimage, and devotions; the monastic communal and religious life; educational organizations including seminaries, the parochial school system, and the missions; the parish system; Christian base communities; lay social and spiritual organizations; religious festivals and public celebrations; private belief, devotionalism and religious practices; and the individual uses of sacramentalism.

Expressions of vernacular Catholicism can be observed within Dignity as within the Catholic community at large through two specific contexts: the religious beliefs and practices of the individual Catholic and the vernacular religion of the group. Although there is much that can be analyzed about the vernacular religion of the group, I mainly concentrate in this article on the vernacular religion of the individual because it is there that vernacular religious creativity can be seen most vividly.

At the individual level, Dignity members manifested the same kind of traditional piety, creative devotionalism, individual behaviors and opinions as could be seen at any other Catholic home, parish, or gathering. Such expressions could be observed in specific ways: gestures (for example, at a Dignity Mass in New York City, I recall seeing a man holding the hand of the statue of the dead Jesus as he placed the Communion wafer in his mouth); narratives (for example, an informant related to me a complex memorate and spiritual insight about Jesus' Sacred Heart and the Real Presence); attention to religious material culture (for example, mass-produced religious ephemera, such as holy cards and inexpensive prayer books, were often found at the Dignity information table before and after Sunday liturgy); paraliturgical gatherings (for example, a Dignity prayer group met weekly for the recitation of the rosary); cultural habits (for example, like many American Catholics some members of Dignity rushed to exit the Mass immediately after the distribution of Communion); personal opinions (for example, feelings of anticlericalism such as those directed at the local archbishop); or personal decisions about religion (for example, decisions to attend Mass at local archdiocesan parishes on occasion as well as the evening Dignity service).

[4] By institutions, I mean not only social entities, but also the individual formulation, creation, and sustaining of ongoing structure within people's lives exemplified by the term "uniculture" (See PRIMIANO 1995: 49–50).

Of course, such expressions of traditional piety, personal experience narrative, personal decisions, etc. had the additional quality for Dignity members of being filtered and negotiated through their unique perspective within the Church. The weekly prayer service and recitation of the rosary by more conservatively minded members was specifically intended as a prayer for those suffering from AIDS within the gay community. The anticlerical feelings regarding the Church's hierarchy were directed against their refusal to acknowledge or support their gay flock. This is not to say that Dignity members could never relate to their religion without a gay reference, but they did possess a strong sense of themselves as gay people. Their time at Dignity insured an exposure to gay concerns and a gay male culture that comforted some, bothered others, but seemed to instill in most a sense of community (see PRIMIANO 1993b).

When these Catholics meditated on Christ, they were thinking of him as a single man among other men, and for some as the man who had a special friendship with his apostle, John. When they thought of the Virgin Mary, they personalized that devotion thinking of her as their own mother, the mother of a son who never married, and who did not fulfill the heterosexual expectations of his day. My informant, who told me of his supernatural insight about the mysteries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, experienced in his daily reception of the Eucharist at a local parish an intense understanding of his relationship with Jesus, one which richly detailed a personal meshing of both Catholic and gay sensibilities. He noted:

> Communion kept me together, and every day I felt like this unconditional love had loved me and then I'd go off to my dark night of confusion and misery [as a gay man]. But I always felt that for this early morning hour this love had come and really loved me, and that was really great, and I felt the Sacred Heart of Jesus was for me all the intensity of love I could have ever wanted to experience from a human person. It was like this man came to me everyday and he loved me everyday, and Jesus was his name.

The process of negotiation emerging from the interpretations of religion in the individual Catholic's life has been in evidence throughout the history of the Roman Catholic tradition influencing everything from personal practice to the codification of belief within institutions. From the rise of the cult of the saints to post-industrial Marian pilgrimage and from the formation of Dignity Masses to the writings of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger about homosexual people from the Congregation For The Doctrine of the Faith – all these expressions involve believers in personal acts of interpretation of religious belief and practice. The vernacular process begins with the synthesis of an original vernacular religious insight with the social interaction of family, community, and tradition. The original vernacular creations of individuals most certainly will be lost over time, but a rich process of vernacular interpretation continues whether it involves a believer in acts of preservation, innovation, or radical change. Through the agreement of a community of like-minded individuals, inter-

pretations can be preserved and concertized as religious institutions. While the vernacular religious voices of the original individuals may be obscured, the creative action of the constant negotiation of religion remains a consistent quality within those institutions.

At the community level, Dignity, in 1985, embarked on an ambitious plan to present its own statement on sexual ethics "to our brothers and sisters in the lesbian and gay community, and to the wider Church" (1989:2). It was the desire of its leaders in both Philadelphia and throughout the country that this document would complement Dignity's mission as a support group and community of resistance. These functions needed to continue because the constant flow of people passing through the chapter, and the long time members, needed varying levels of support due to their different stages of acceptance of their homosexuality. Dignity's core members, however, wanted to do more than simply be a movement on the defensive. What individuals desired was for Dignity to behave like the institutional Church and theologize, but using the membership's own perspectives on sexuality shaped from their own individual lives as the foundation. As I was told by a chapter President: "Because up until now Dignity has been trying to, as it were, defend its existence, once we get beyond that point of no longer having to fight for survival, then we can begin to discuss principles like genital activity, and promiscuity, etc."

This idea of incorporating the voices of the faithful into theological statements concerning them was felt to be the style of theologizing in the spirit and letter of the documents of the Second Vatican Council. The preparation of a statement on sexual ethics represented a challenge to the authority of the Catholic hierarchy to be the sole providers of theological direction and policy about sexual ethics in general, and about the sexual morality of gays and lesbians in particular. Jake, who was a member of the Sexual Ethics Task Force, noted: "We are beginning to move into that area of a self-reflection or a self-examination in light of Gospel values as they apply to our lifestyle rather than to justify our lifestyle in light of Gospel principles for somebody else." Dignity as an organized group wished to represent the lived experiences and personal negotiations of its members in its own statement of sexual theology. This action formally completed in 1989 and published as "Sexual Ethics: Experience, Growth, Challenge," was a formal attempt at theologizing by a community of North American Catholics about themselves and a challenge to the traditional structure of Roman Catholic authority on statements of morals.

Dignity Catholics are in many ways interpreting institutionalized religious beliefs, attitudes, images, and rituals to suit the way they want to express their personal relation to the sacred. Their expressions of personal faith reflect the dual nature of their experience of religion which both disempowers and empowers them. Their empowering expressions of faith reflect a creativity, an artistry, if you will, of religious expression and self-interpretation integral to the negotiations of vernacular religion.

Dignity members have brought what they have felt and learned as gay people to their experience as Roman Catholics. The amazing fact of Dignity Philadelphia's faith is vernacular Catholicism. Their ability to sustain and even nurture religious

belief and association with the Church in the face of rejection and exclusion points to religious motivations related to their intrinsically Catholic lives. Their integration of gay and Catholic identities, validated both by individual and communal experience, is exemplary of the influence of vernacular Catholicism and the omnipresence of vernacular religion which represents the practiced religion of all believers.

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"OBEYING GOD RATHER THAN MAN" (ACTS 5:29): CHRISTIAN FAITH IN CONFRONTATION WITH POLITICAL CORRECTNESS IN SWEDEN

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Abstract: At present Sweden is, like other industrialized countries, a highly secularized society. The Church of Sweden, divorced from the state in the year 2000, has lost most of its influence and has become more or less a service institution to lend solemnity to the rites-de-passage of life: baptism, weddings and funerals. Since the 1930s there has been a politically oriented change in the view of the family. The core family as the foundation of society has gradually been dissolved. The system in which the housewife takes care of her family and home with the husband as the sole provider has changed. Both husband and wife pay tax on their own incomes, rather than each paying tax on half of the family's total income. This has made it virtually impossible to manage with only one provider. The political ideal for women was to become independent economically. With the social "revolution" of 1968, everybody was led to believe that the only way of "realizing oneself" was to get a job outside the home. The children should be taken care of in public day centers. With both man and wife fully occupied outside the home little time was left for family life. Within this completely secularized society there exist small, struggling groups whose lives are dominated by Christian ideals. I have studied one such group consisting of pietistic believers within the Church of Sweden: a remnant of the great revival that swept the west coast of Sweden in the last century and the beginning of the 1900s. They maintain a different way of life in confrontation with what is today considered as politically correct. Until the first decades of 20th century their way of life and their ideals were in great part in keeping with what was accepted in society. Now their way of life is very different. Beside their economical hardship due to the tax system, they suffer ideologically. They do not believe in priesthood for women. Recent political decisions declare that only men who fully accept female priesthood are to be ordained in the Church of Sweden, so they might soon find themselves lacking ordained male preachers. They might be faced with the idea hateful to them of forming a free church. A comparable group with comparable ideas are the very Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem and in Brooklyn or even the Amish people in Pennsylvania. While the Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem take political action to change their secular society, the west Swedish pietists in no way act to convince others to adapt to their life style. Their only way of influencing others is by their way of living "in the world" as Christian examples. Although they are now fully conscious that they stand out from their background and that their persistence in keeping to their faith means hardships, they do not plan to adapt themselves to the surrounding society. Instead they work so that the surrounding society will gradually adapt to their ideals of life. *My question is: will they leave the Church of Sweden or will they persist in finding unobtrusive ways to find "a right sermon" within the church they love?*

Keywords: Sweden, secularization, society, Christian ideals, politics

Sweden is, like many other industrialized countries, a highly secularized society. The Church of Sweden has been an established State Church for centuries, but on January 1, 2000, it is separated from the State. It will then stand on its own and although it will gain some freedom from political decisions, it will lose its well organized economy, but will keep some of its privileges and duties. During the 1900s it has gradually lost most of its influence on society and has become more or less a service

institution to lend solemnity to the rites-de-passage of life: baptisms, weddings and funerals. Faced with a great change, the church employees and the church politicians are struggling to increase the small numbers of people who attend different kinds of services. There is, too, a very large body of church administrators that will have to look for new work.

Since the 1930s there has been a politically oriented change in the view of the family. The core family as the foundation of society has gradually been dissolved. The system in which the housewife takes care of her family and home with the husband as the sole provider has changed, especially since the 1960s. Both husband and wife pay tax on their own incomes, rather than the breadwinner paying tax on the family's total income with deduction for wife and children. This has made it virtually impossible to manage with only one provider. The political ideal for women was to become independent economically. With the social "revolution" of 1968, everybody was led to believe that the only way of "realizing oneself" was to get a job outside the home. The children should be taken care of in public day centers. With both man and wife fully occupied outside the home and the children in different kinds of day care centers according to age, little time is left for family life. An important change is that sit-down meals for the whole family are becoming rare. Instead there are quick individual meals when you are on the run. Among other effects there is a noticeable change in people's table manners, ability to engage in ordered conversation, and perhaps more important: much less change of passing on family traditions and human know-how.

Within this otherwise completely secularized society there exist small struggling groups whose life is dominated by Christian ideals and who try to keep the core family together and pass their traditions and their faith on to coming generations. I have studied one such group consisting of pietistic believers within the Church of Sweden: a remnant of the great revival that swept the west coast of Sweden in the last century and the beginning of the 1900s (LEWIS 1997). They maintain a different way of life in confrontation with what is today considered as politically correct. Until the first decades of the 20th century their way of life and their ideals were in great part in keeping with what was accepted in society. Now their way of life is very different and they are more or less a marginalized group. I am now in the process of analysing how they react to the coming of the third millennium.

Beside their economical hardship due to the tax system that "punishes" families with only one parent on the labour market, they suffer ideologically. Most noticeable politically is that they do not believe in priesthood for women, a belief founded on biblical grounds. Recent political decisions in Sweden declare that only men who fully accept female priesthood are to be ordained in the Church of Sweden. Men, already ordained, cannot be promoted to vicars. In the public eye this has become an inflamed question of equality, rather than of Christian belief. Thus these pietistic believers might soon find themselves at a loss for ordained male preachers they can accept. Another threat is that they might find themselves without a church where they can celebrate the service in the way they are accustomed to. They might be faced with the idea hateful to them of forming a free church. Hateful since they

consider the Church of Sweden their spiritual home, where they find the confession they embrace and the "Gemeinschaft" (ASPLUND 1983, 1987, 1991) they belong to.

Another danger to this way of life is a beginning sectarianism. Hurt and rather disappointed at two front wars from both society and the established Church they are born into, they have started to withdraw from their secularized surroundings when they have a choice in private life. The younger generation with many children are showing a growing tendency to socialize within the circle of "sibblings of grace". Since this lay people's chosen way of evangelization is to live and work "in the world" and socialize with workmates and neighbours as examples of how their Christian beliefs form them, this indicates a serious change.

According to this pietistic way of life parents should not meddle in the choice of life partner; this should be a question for the contrahents and God. That way women might have an important task: to bring a secularized husband, who is the choice of her heart, to Christ (1.Peter 3:1) by prayers and by being a good example in daily life. Quite contrary to this tradition, I have noticed an active effort of parents to bring "suitable" young people together and a tendency to early marriages within the group.

Another leading idea is the individual responsibility for your own life. You should not trust to a collective but rely on your own resources. This ideal has led to independence and self assurance in all earthly affairs coupled with a deep humility and submission to the will of God. Sectarianism, on the other hand, allows you to hide in a group. It might lead to endogamy both spiritually and biologically and then another important factor will be lost: to stand on your own, to be visible as an individual, to be a unique being with unique qualities, endowed by God with an unique mission on earth.

Outsiders note rather critically that Swedish people and especially Swedish people as represented by the media, favour one idea at a time. The raging public discussion (1998-99) has concerned sexually deviating groups: homosexuals, lesbians, transvestites and their rights in society. The Archbishop of Sweden has been instrumental in allowing and encouraging an exhibition consisting of photographies of a figure presented as Christ among such sexually inclined human beings and depicted as being one of them. This led to the Pope withdrawing an invitation to the Archbishop to visit the Vatican. More important it led to an enlarging clift between many Christians and the established Church as represented by the Archbishop, other bishops and priests adhering to this politically correct notion. Quite a few immigrant churches arranged demonstrations against what they considered as blasphemy. Muslims and Jews pronounced their surprise at a clergy who approved of Christ being shown this way and who chose to point to homosexuals as a specially suffering group foregoing less spectacular sufferers as the unemployed, the homeless, the old, the growing number of crime victims, war victims, etc.

In accordance with many other Christians the pietists I discuss here took a definite stand on this exhibition: it should not be shown. Showing it in churches was to them an act of blasphemy and an attempt to lessen the importance of Christ and degrade him to be a sinner amongst sinners.

Most of them seem to consider homosexual practice sinful the same way or even stronger as they look upon heterosexual promiscuity. Their point is, too, that Christ, although fully human, chose not to practice his sexuality. The public discussion went on and on and led to actual, mostly verbal, abuse of people who criticized this exhibition and what it brought about. It became gradually obvious that there was only one politically correct view on this problem and even normally outspoken people became wary of expressing contradictory notions at the risk of being put down as loveless fundamentalists and, strangely, racists. I have followed this discussions in three daily newspapers of different political colours and it has been strange reading.

In an article in *Svenska Dagbladet* in July 1999 a philosopher (?) argued that this entire discussion had been brought about by representatives of the established Church, since the question of the homosexuals and their place in Church and society was the last question left, where the Church as a body could show broadmindedness. Everything else as abortions, promiscuity, the rights of criminals and civil servants as embezzlers, etc. had already been used up as arguments to show what the Church was prepared to accept and embrace in its quest to be seen and heard and to avoid more difficult problems like the survival of the Church of Sweden, according to Olsson. The most surprising factor was that nobody representing the Church, thus addressed, took up this argument.

The discussion in the media about the advent of the new millennium mostly concerns what will happen to our computer-directed society, purely mechanically. Will all the lights go out, will all the iceboxes turn warm, the stoves turn cold? Will the trains stand still, will the aeroplanes fall down?

Similar questions in a spiritual dress concern the pietists: Will God finally tire of his creation? Will He stop the world? Will New Age with all its magnetisms, crystals, horoscopes, and magic manipulations win over people from a decadent Church? It seems obvious to them that the evil force is at large. The wars on the Balkan, the senseless shooting of civilians in the U.S., the bombing of innocent people in Russia are all his manifest doings to create disorder and to make people lose all hope, they claim. All in all, on the Eve of the new millennium they feel a great trepidation as to what will happen to the world.

A comparable group with comparable ideas are the very Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem and in Brooklyn or even the Amish people in Pennsylvania. The Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem take political action to change their secular society, not hesitating to use violence. The Amish people remain steadfastly within their communities, keeping to their ways, seeming not to worry about the world outside. The west Swedish pietists, so far, have in no way acted to convince others to adapt to their life style. Their only given way of influencing others is by their way of living "in the world" as Christian examples. Although they are now fully conscious that they stand out from their background and that their persistence in keeping to their faith means hardships, they do not plan to adapt themselves to the surrounding society. Instead they hope that the surrounding society will gradually adapt to their ideals of life.

In the midst of all this , they do not seem to fear for themselves: As long as they listen very carefully to "the voice of Christ", put their trust in him and remain in

their given task, God will keep his promises to take care of them. One of God's foremost promises, according to them, is that "the inner church, the Body of Christ" will remain as long as the world stands. One of their beliefs is, that they are building-stones in "this inner church" where Christ is the head. But their burning question is: how will they best obey God in this time of great change? Will He demand of them that they go out as active witnesses?

My question is: will they be forced out of the Church of Sweden for political reasons or will they persist in their unobtrusive ways to find "a right sermon" within the church they love?

SOURCES

This paper rests largely on my structured reading of three daily newspapers during the autumn of 1998 and still going on, with the perspective how politics influence the practice of a Christian faith.

A continuing source is the many lectures I have been asked to give in connection with my thesis. This "reciprocal ethnography" (LAWLESS 1992), enables me to follow from the inside the discussion among scientists and, more importantly, among lay people concerning questions of interest for this article.

NEWSPAPERS USED

Svenska Dagbladet, the leading conservative newspaper in Sweden.
Östgöta-Correspondenten, a large local liberal newspaper, often cited in other press.
Bohusläningen, a small, independent liberal daily of long standing, used here because it has a very lively coverage of the opinions of ordinary people, not least the Christians of the west coast.
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IDEAS ABOUT THE PAST AND TRADITION IN THE DISCOURSE ABOUT NEO-SHAMANISM IN A NORWEGIAN CONTEXT

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Abstract: This paper concerns the idea of neo-shamanism within modern popular religion. Within new religious movements, new religiosity or New Age, the interest in what has been perceived of as old religions is growing steadily. One of these old religions is shamanism, often called neo-shamanism in its modern shaping. This interest in shamanism has been met with considerable ciriticism from without, using arguments that says that new shamanism has nothing to do with "real" shamanism, it is being misunderstood, distorted, etc. This criticism has been met with the "tradition" as an argument, and the "new" shamanism is from "within" being understood in terms of unbroken traditions in certain places in the world. The value of tradition and traditional thoughts are being highlighted in these arguments.

Keywords: shamanism, neo-shamanism, neo-paganism, tradition, New Age, modern popular religions

In this paper I will discuss expressions, or utterances, about modern shamanism, often referred to as neo-shamanism. The utterances are arguments in a discourse about modern shamanism, a discourse that also relates to different narratives of the past.

By using the term "utterance" I indicate that these expressions are not seen as narratives, as representations of experiences or occurrences in the "real" world, but rather as representations of other narratives about similar things. The utterances enter in relation with past utterances that had the same object, and with those of the future, which it foresees as answers.[1]

MODERN POPULAR RELIGION

Neo-shamanism can be seen as part of modern popular religion, that which is defined as *New Age*. New Age is neither a specific religion nor a distinct movement, but rather a loose designation for certain clusters of ideas, values, and activities. It is an umbrella term, covering modern Western developments in for instance occultism, shamanism, Eastern spirituality, reincarnation, healing, astrology, tarot, crystals, channeling, strategies for personal transformation, thoughts about a new age, etc.

[1] M. BAHKTIN in: TODOROV 1984: 53.

Contemporary interest in New Age ideas indicates important religious changes in modern society, a change that implies a decline of institutionally specialized religion, the dominant social form of religion in the Western world for many centuries, and historically a particularly important social form of religion which has been established in the Christian West and which was represented by churches, sects and denominations. It was marked by monopolies in the production, distribution and maintenance of sacralized, transcendent universes. The New Age represents a new, institutionally less visible social form of religion which seems to become dominant at the expense of the older form.[2] To the extent that New Age appears as unorganized, non-authoritarian and non-dogmatic, it can be perceived as modern popular religion. The Swedish historian of religions, Olaf HAMMER, in his book about New Age, even asks if New Age is the new folk belief.[3]

One of the consequences of the diminished influence of religious institutions is that religious expressions appear in new and unexpected contexts – in markets or cafés, in the mass media, bookshops, book clubs or weekly magazines. The expressions discussed in this paper are drawn from different contexts, perhaps more profane than religious, which also demonstrates another underlying aspect within New Age; it is to be found in intersections between the religious and the profane.

One of the traits of New Age is that major subjects of interest seem to vary from time to time, New Age is steadily changing. Particularly characteristic of the seventies was the prominence of Eastern spiritual teachers; the eighties was characterized by an emphasis on channeled entities; and now in the nineties the interest in channeling seems to be waning and the new emphasis is on shamanism, Native American spirituality or neo-paganism.[4] Neo-paganism implies a religion based on the worship of nature and of ancient indigenous traditions, and it has been claimed to be the new religion fast developing as *The* new religion of the twenty-first century.[5] Neo-paganism covers all those modern movements based on the conviction that firstly all that Christianity has traditionally denounced as idolatry and superstition actually represents a profound and meaningful religious worldview, and secondly that a religious practice based on this worldview can and should be revitalized in our modern world.[6]

DETRADITIONALIZATION AND TRADITIONALIZATION

Within New Age, current ideas are not necessarily considered as *new*, but rather as revitalizations of old wisdom traditions. However, various religious traditions and ideas are being used in new and unexpected ways, rather than with faithfulness to-

[2] LUCKMANN 1996.
[3] HAMMER 1997.
[4] LEWIS-MELTON 1992.
[5] HARDMAN 1995.
[6] HANEGRAAFF 1998.

wards the right dogma, a trait that has been met with considerable criticism. Many people react towards the New Age interpretations of the differing ideas, postulating that reincarnation or shamanism for instance, are being both misunderstood and misinterpreted.

The English historian of religions Paul HEELAS uses the concept *detraditionalization* when describing New Age; because New Age is, in his words, "rejecting voices of authority associated with established orders."[7] Detraditionalization is in his apprenhension connected to the anti-authoritarian aspect of the New Age. *A religious market,* is also a description of New Age, a market, where the individual is given the freedom – and authority – to choose from a variety of sacred universes.[8]

In his article *Tradition in the post-traditional world,* Zygmunt BAUMAN argues that one should not conceive of modern society as one where "tradition is losing its authority, or us losing our respect for it, or our demand for 'heritage' and 'historical memory' running short, or us no more believing 'the old' to be 'beautiful'. [...] The idea of the 'post-traditional society' is better understood as referring to the *surplus* of traditions ... too many competitive traditions for any one of them to secure a monopolistic authority."[9] The idea of a religious market is a depiction of such a surplus of traditions.

At the same time as New Age can be seen as a detraditionalized religion, the idea of tradition and the past play an important role in discussions, interpretations, choices and legitimations within, and connected to, New Age. In the utterances that will be discussed here, the past and tradition are present in various ways, not as context, but rather as interpretation and argument to stress certain points. Traditionalization – by which I mean tying present ideas and values to the past in meaningful ways, is an important point in these four expressions. The choices made in the religious market – among the surplus of traditions – are given authority by tying personal choices to chosen pasts. The utterances are articulations from different positions in a discourse about whether neo-shamanism is genuine or spurious.

New Age is a controversial religion. Many critical voices have risen against this fast developing popular religion. The first utterance to be discussed is an extract from a critical book about New Age called *Spiritual Tourism,* by the Norwegian journalist Bjørg VINDSETMO. The second story was told to me in an interview with a female shaman and relates about how and why the woman interviewed chose the way of the shaman. The third story is taken from a Norwegian newspaper *Dagbladet* about a female shaman in a small Sami village in Finnmark; the most Northern part of Norway.

[7] HEELAS 1996: 22.
[8] LUCKMANN 1996: 73.
[9] BAUMANN 1998: 14.

THE BREAK WITH TRADITION

In the book *Spiritual tourism,* with the subtitle: *About religion, therapy and magic,* the writer Bjørg VINDSETMO throws critical light on the innumerable forms of worldviews and therapies we find within modern religious movements. The writer's position is catholic and culture-critical, and her style is ironical. Her opinion about the new religious movements is that they represent a mixture of religion and therapy, of which she is very critical, and writes about in an ironical way. "Most typical of the new religiosity of our times is its *therapeutic* essence. Therapy has become a religion, and even worse, religion has become therapy. Therapy does no longer imply the healing of illness. Therapy has become a way of life, an attitude towards life"[10], she states. Her way of characterizing the New Age religion implies ideas of spiritual decline.

One chapter in the book relates neo-shamanism, in the writer's view one of the four most important therapies within modern "alternative therapies". The title of the chapter asks: "Are shamanistic journeys therapy"? It starts with a description of a female Swedish shaman whom she nick-names *"Little Hiawatha". Little Hiawatha* is a figure from the Disney universe, a cartoon figure. By using a name referring to the Disney universe she uses a word filled with a voice that invokes ideas about a superficial, trivial, commercial and not genuine world.

Little Hiawatha – the shaman, not the Disney figure, is described as super elegant – as a "wandering fashion show for indigenous people" as she ironically puts it, and we are being told that *little Hiawatha* is teaching modern businessmen creativity and self development besides her praxis as shaman. At a lunch-break at the meeting where she met "little Hiawatha" the writer was sitting at the same table as two women in their forties and she tells: "Little Hiawatha had invited people on a shamanistic journey the same evening. One of the women at the table asks, a bit confused: 'Are shamanistic journeys therapy'? No, the other woman answers: 'It comes from India'. An atmosphere of insecurity spread round the table", the writer tells us.

The following vision is inspired by this episode: "Before me, I could see them, well educated, seemingly successful women sitting in a circle on the floor the same evening. Little Hiawatha's drumming, echoing dense jungle or barren tundra, were accompanying them on a shamanistic journey – before they each, at the end of the evening, went home to their urban, rather lonely women's lives."[11]

In this description New Age is being perceived as a religion for frustrated, lonely women at a certain period of their life, ignorant women, easy to fool. This vision, confirms certain wide-spread ideas – perhaps prejudices – about New Age. VINDSETMO's description and partly ridicule express resistance against new spiritualism and neo-shamanism. The way she contextualizes her story provides the reader

[10] VINDSETMO 1995: 15.
[11] VINDSETMO 1995: 18–19.

with certain associations. We get the impression that shamanism is for exhibitionistic, frustrated and ignorant women of a certain age.

After this introduction Bjørg VINDSETMO discusses "real" shamanism. She refers to shamanism as the world's oldest religion and asks: "how can our earliest forefathers' religious life become something that in a modern woman's worldview is a new form of therapy she perhaps might be trying? And what makes Little Hiawatha believe that *she* is a shaman?"

VINDSETMO's perception of shamanism as our earliest forefathers' religion is being used to create distance between the shamans of to-day and our forefathers. She is of the opinion that parts of the shamanistic universe are falling out in the modern version. In her opinion neo-shamanism is not a genuine form of shamanism. VINDSETMO describes the neo-shamanism as a *break with tradition;* a remnant or a bleak shade of the authentic version. In her opinion this is an argument that neo-shamanism is spurious religion. By referring to shamans of the past, she creates a picture of shamanism of the past as genuine and modern shamanism as a bleak forgery.

One of the traits of postmodern culture is the disembedding of ideas, images and signs, which means that ideas and meanings have been disconnected from their original context, old collective standards or constraints, and are free to be connected to any new context. Within New Age this means among other things, that religious elements from older, or culturally strange religious traditions are being interpreted in, and related to new and unorthodox ways.[12]

The "free use" of religious traditions, so to speak, is in critical interpretations of New Age described in concepts of genuine and spurious. Religious traditions are said to be distorted, misrepresented or corrupted, a view implying the idea about a religious tradition being coherent, where the scriptures, ideas and rituals constitute united entities. If components are broken away or detached from the original tradition, the elements are said to lose its authenticity.

A PERSONAL CONNECTION TO THE PAST

Let me now introduce one female shaman I interviewed some years ago. Her name is *Anne Lise,* and I will let her tell the story about how and why she became a shaman.

When I met her she had started on the long, hard way of the shaman, she told me. And why was she – a journalist and mother of a five-year-old son – on this way? "I just fell over a course in shamanism", she said and went on: "And during the course, it appeared that I already *knew* about the things we were being taught. And I could not understand where I had learned this. So it appeared that I also knew how to go further and to do things we had not yet talked about. I became more and more

[12] FEATHERSTONE 1995: 4.

conscious that I knew and remembered many things, but that I did not know from where I had this knowledge."

After a while *Anne Lise* understood why she already knew things they were to learn at the course, that she was advanced in the shamanistic learnings so to speak. She understood that she had been a shaman in native Indian tribes in several of her earlier lives. She had lived many earlier lives as an indigenous human or native Indian, and one of the first lives she can remember is a shaman in Sibiria. Her duty in her life here and now is to collect the knowledge from her shamanistic lives, things related to indigenous people, to nature and to food. Collecting knowledge from earlier lives, imply to do things and live one's life in ways resembling your former lives, was her explanation.

Anne Lise went to Arizona because she wanted to be in touch with native American Indians, first of all the Hopi tribe, because they are, as she said, the cultural source of neo-shamanism. She also feels sure that she has been Hopi in earlier lives. The Hopi are the last authentic Native Indians in the sense that they have kept their old religion, she said. Anne Lise feels a strong attraction to the Hopi, and in her opinion she looks like a Hopi, to her a further proof of her former lives. She also got a message that it was her duty to go to Arizona. One morning when she woke she just *knew* that she had to go. This was her first real message, she tells.

Anne Lise relates about her choice to become a shaman in terms of experiences, certain knowledge and messages. She *experienced* that she knew shamanism – she suddenly received a message that it was her duty to go to Arizona. These occurrences led her on the way of the shaman. Anne Lise's history illustrates that experiences of intuition, alignment or an inner voice – serve to inform religious judgements, decisions and choices.

Re-incarnation – in Anne Lise's interpretation and use of these ideas – creates for her a personal connection to the past. This past is above all related to the wisdom of indigenous people, a wisdom that it is her duty in her present life to collect and share with others. When Anne Lise identifies herself with the Hopi, it connects her to a past that in some ways seems better. At the same time, in Anne Lise's universe, this past is possible to reach in the here and now, because it in fact exists in another place, in this case in Arizona USA. "The model of human excellence and happiness can thus be sought in the present, in the mode of life of existing primitive, or so-called 'savage' peoples", Marion BOWMAN says in her article *The Noble Savage and the Global village.*[13]

Anne Lise's choice of both a past and a future as an Indian shaman is individual and personal, but can also be seen as part of a narrative about wisdoms from the past, and our common roots in pre-Christian tradition. The book *The wisdom of the Native Indians,* for instance is promoted by the headline: "The ecological way of life", and the text states: "What was the source for the Indians' wisdom and respect for the unity of all things? Where did they collect their well informed overall view

[13] BOWMAN 1995.

from? Why was it that natives from different areas of the American continent all followed the way of peace and walked it in beauty? Only a civilized, consuming fool would ask such questions, and if you are interested in the answers, we warmly recommend the books about the Hopi-Navaho and Lakota-Indians. In these books their history, their philosophy of life, their words of wisdom, the rituals, the customs, and the people – a colourful and magical texture so unlike the Hollywood myth we are being told. The rich traditions and culture of the Indians, the myth and the magic appeal to us all".[14] By using words and concepts like wisdom, rituals, rich traditions, myth and magic, words and concepts with an attractive flavour, attractive pasts are also created about Indian native cultures, pasts modern man wants to relate himself to.

Anne Lise connects parts of particular value in her present life, to a chosen past, far away in time and in space, but still possible to experience. By traditionalizing her new life she creates continuity, and emphasizes certain aspects of her identity.

HIDDEN TRADITIONS

The Norwegian national newspaper, *Dagbladet,* published a year ago a story about a female shaman. Her name is Biret Maret Kallio. She lives in a small village in Finnmark, the traditional Sami area in Norway. Besides her work as a shaman she also works as a teacher. The background for the newspaper's interest in Biret was the fact that her shamanistic work had caused a lot of antagonism in the village. She had followers, but also enemies, and the enemies were mostly represented by the very pietistic Christians in the village. The headline in the newspaper states: "Fight over drums in the Sami village." The introduction to the story goes: "She believes in the drum's power and is accused of being the Devil's delegate. – But Biret states: 'It was the Christian people who brought God and the Devil to the Sami people. Not me'."

The theme in this newspaper story is the antagonism between the Christian Church and alternative religions. The Christian people in the village accused Biret of being the Devil's delegate, but Biret turns the Christian redemption towards her Christian enemies when stating that the Devil was of Christian origin, and belongs to a Christian universe brought to the Sami from outside. By this statement, she refers to the past, and demonstrates that *her* religion represents the religious tradition of the Sami people.

The newspaper relates how Biret's actions as shaman together with a group calling themselves *Noaide,* the old Sami name for shaman, invoke the Christians' anger. It is stated in the story: "They are fighting about the souls in the Sami village. Therefore it is highly controversial when Biret now gathers her group and sacrifices to the old gods."

[14] *Energica* 1996/3.

In the newspaper it is said: "Most people think that Christianity gained victory over paganism once and for all." But what the story is indicating is that an unbroken tradition has been kept alive in the shadow of Christian religion. Biret herself invokes an unbroken tradition when she got the last word in the story saying: "My work has nothing to do with New Age, this is *Old Age.* The drum is a vehicle for contact with one's inner self, with nature, with the forefathers, and the spirits."

When Biret dissociates herself from the term New Age and elegantly says that her beliefs and doings are about Old Age, she refers to her own activity as being from the olden times, and indicates that her own religion is older than Christianity. She traditionalizes her shamanistic activity by tying her activities to the past, a past that is more in accordance with the Sami culture.

The story about Biret invokes ideas about an old tradition, that has continuously been kept alive in the hidden, in the shadow of a dominant ideology. Two years ago, a book by a Russian psychiatrist Olga Kharitidi was published in Norwegian and was book of the month in a book club called Energica aimed at people with spiritual interests. The book is a personal narrative about the writer's experiences when meeting a Siberian shaman and her initiation to shamanism. She collected the material for the book in a far away and isolated area – the Altaj mountains in Siberia which the indigenous people up to modern times have dominated alone, it is stated in the book review. The writer is initiated to shamanism, and this knowledge becomes of great use to her in her work as psychiatrist.

Both the newspaper story about Biret and Olga's story from Siberia indicate that ancient traditions have been preserved in remote places in the world, more or less under-ground. In communities, untouched by modern times, wisdom and knowledge are being preserved that exceeds modern knowledge.

MODERN MAN'S RELATION TO THE PAST

The narratives discussed here tell about modern man's relation to Shamanism, often described as man's oldest religion. Various positions in a discourse about modern shamanism are being expressed. The question discussed in the narratives is whether neo-shamanism is genuine or spurious, the arguments used are related to various ideas about tradition and the past.

In VINDSETMO's story neo-shamanism represents a break with the shamanism of the past, and is described as a bleak echo of the real and genuine tradition. By referring to the past, she regards present religious ideas as a spiritual decline.

The story about the shaman in a Sami village in Norway, or the book about the Russian psychiatrist's encounter with Siberian shamanism, invoke ideas about a religious tradition kept alive in the hidden, and Biret in the Sami village seems to represent a continuation of this tradition. The Altaj mountains in Siberia represent surroundings untouched by modern conditions, where wisdom from a more or less mythical past has been concealed and kept alive in an unbroken continuity. The stories communicate that revelation of this tradition and with that the wisdoms of

the past can help modern people to a better life. Also Anne Lise talks about her choice of the shamanistic road in this way. Important to her is that the knowledge she has brought with her from her past lives as shaman, is a knowledge our own society needs.

VINDSETMO describes contemporary ideas about shamanism as spiritual decline, the other narratives describe ways of using the ideas from the past to the best for the present. Common in the stories is the idea that the past represents more consistent traditions and greater wisdoms. Common in the stories is also that the past is not a context for the matters told about, but is interwoven in the stories as interpretation and argument. The various voices take different positions demanding their own interpretation of reality, about what is true or false.

The idea that the unity and continuity of the world is lost can be seen as part of modern mentality. The Norwegian anthropologist Thomas Hylland ERIKSEN talks about *the fight over the past* as an important part of modern societies all over the world.[15] His opinion is that everybody uses the past to create collective identities. The past is vague and versatile, he says, it can be described in selective and subjective ways, whether the description comes from a history book or from oral tradition.

What I have discussed here is how the past is being used in popular interpretation within a New Age context. The past and tradition are *arguments* for the signification and value of various beliefs and ideas, and are being sacralized when seen as containing wisdom and spirituality that are of much larger dimensions than that of contemporary society. When the past is tied to the here and now the symbolic power of the past creates an enchantment which will affect the present.

The use of the past within New Age is one example on how modern man establishes continuities, authenticizes the past, and authorizes particular representations in images and stories.[16] The past and tradition are being used to legitimize, authenticize and control ideologies and cultural identities both in a New Age discourse and in contemporary society in general.

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INTER-WAR RIGHT-WING MOVEMENTS IN THE BALTIC STATES AND THEIR RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

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Abstract: The article discusses the different religious affiliations of three inter-war right-wing movements in the Baltic States. The Lithuanian Iron Wolf remained indifferent to the religious issues, the Estonian Veterans' League stressed the value of the Christian faith and formed links with the Lutheran Church, while the Latvian Thundercross favoured the ideas of the pre-Christian revivalism and closely collaborated with the Dievturi movement. The difference in religious choice is explained by (1) the different character of the Estonian (radical right) and the Latvian (extreme right) movements and (2) the formalisation of the pre-Christian revivalism ideology according to the Protestant pattern. Although the doctrine differed greatly, the style of thought and manner of presentation made the Latvian pre-Christian revivalism more open to the right-wing political thought – a feature commonly found with the Protestant Churches of Europe.

Keywords: religion, nationalism, pre-Christian revivalism, radical politics, Neo-Paganism, Protestantism, Dievturība, "The Iron Wolf", "Thundercross", "Estonian Veterans' League"

Foreigners usually see the Baltic States as a unitary space. This is probably due both to their geographical location and their shared historical experience. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia emerged as parliamentary republics at the end of the First World War in place of the Western provinces of the Russian Empire. Later on, authoritarian regimes of Antanas Smetona (1926–40), Kārlis Ulmanis (1934–40) and Konstantin Päts (1934–40) were imposed on Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, respectively. All three Baltic States were occupied by Soviet troops in 1940 and by Nazi Germany in 1941–45, and were re-incorporated into the Soviet Union. The Baltic States regained independence in 1991.

The religious histories of the Baltic peoples were, however, rather disparate. Lithuania was and still remains, a Roman Catholic country with close, though not formally recognised, ties between the Church and the state. It is undoubtedly the least secularised of all Baltic States. In contrast, Estonia today is a secular country where the largest religious organisation is the Estonian Evangelic Lutheran Church. By the 1934 Census, 78% of the entire population were Lutheran and 19% Orthodox.[1] The Latvian case is probably the most complex. At present, the Roman Catholic and Lutheran Churches have – at least nominally – about the same numbers of the adherents and there is also a considerable Russian Orthodox population. Ac-

[1] RAUN 1991: 135.

cording to the 1935 Census, 55.2% of the 1 950 502 population were Lutheran, 24.4% Roman Catholic, 8.9% Orthodox; other denominations were represented by smaller numbers.[2]

This chapter will analyse one particular aspect of Baltic religious history, namely, the religious affiliations of right-wing movements. I would not agree that *"movements focused on the direct political action do tend to compete with religious movements, especially sects, for adherents. People who find satisfaction in religious compensators tend not to be moved to embrace political movement [...] people tend to support either one or another, not both."*[3] Though some political ideologies possess certain facets of religion and are sometimes viewed as religions in themselves – Fascism and Nazism, for example – yet the links between political and religious organisations deserve to be explored in detail.

Specifically, I will focus on the relationship between the Latvian extreme right and pre-Christian revivalism. The appeal of the latter to right wing politicians is well known. Such ideas as of the "spirit of the nation and/or race" and military valour often evoked by the right together with the racial and cultural exclusiveness and supremacy fit perfectly with the commonly held – and mostly incorrect – vision of the early European religions with their pantheons of austere warrior gods. The symbolism of festivals and of signs like swastika had proved equally attractive.

Although the relationship between particular Christian Churches and the Right has been at times ambiguous, as far as doctrine is concerned, Christianity is a problem for the right-wing political thought. One reason is the strong awareness of the weakness of the human nature that the majority of the Christian Churches share – a very different anthropological perspective from the emphasis on youth, health and masculinity, carried in its extreme to ruthlessness, found within the right ideology. Another reason is the fact that the Christian doctrine raises the human being – in terms of axiology – above environment, both nature and social and/or national group. Man is first and foremost valued as an individual and not as a member of a particular nation or social class. According to the Christian doctrine, a person is also individually and not collectively answerable to God. Ideology of the radical and extreme right movements, in contrast, called for subordination of the individual needs and values to the needs of the nation. The established Churches were often seen as ideological rivals challenging the authority of the political elite. It is not surprising then, for example, that Nazi state officials either sought to build the bridge between the German Evangelic Church and National Socialism by modifying Christian doctrine and supporting the so called German Christianity, or called for the abandonment of Christianity entirely – as Alfred Rosenberg did.[4] Recently, concerns have been expressed as to links between the Neo-Pagan thought and the extreme right-wing movements in Russia.[5] V. YEMELIANOV, one of the founders of the ill-famed

[2] KRUMINA-KONKOVA-GILLS 1998: 430.
[3] STARK-BAINBRIDGE 1985: 524.
[4] See CECIL 1972.
[5] See SHNIRELMAN 1998a.

Russian nationalist organisation *Pamyat* recalled that *Pamyat* was originally intended to be an anti-Christian movement with strong neo-pagan emphasis.[6] *Pamyat* changed its religious orientation to Orthodox in the late eighties – presumably understanding that this would secure a wider mass support.

At this point it is appropriate to say something about the terminology. The present day Neo-Pagans who aspire to reinstate the religions of Celtic Britain, Germany or the Classical Antiquity are, in the words of STARK and BAINBRIDGE, *"cousins of the magic and witchcraft family"*.[7] The modern Neo-Paganism, which originated in the sixties – the Wiccans, Great Goddess worshippers and the like – in all its diversity is generally oriented towards nature and sometimes also the occult.[8] Therefore the word "Pagan" i.e. nature-worshipper, seems to be appropriate. In the majority of cases, it is how adherents identify themselves. Margot ADLER's survey showed that 96.4% of the respondents during her research on Neo-Paganism considered themselves "Pagans" and *"most agreed that Pagans were members of pantheistic, tribal, shamanistic nature religions and that modern Neo-Paganism embodied a respect for the earth and the nature's laws and a conception of deity as immanent"*.[9] The Pagan education Network web page defines their religion as follows:

> Paganism is a broad, eclectic contemporary religious movement that encompasses shamanistic, ecstatic, polytheistic, and magical religions. Most of the religions termed Pagan are characterised by nature-centred spirituality, honouring of pre-Christian deities, dynamic, personal belief systems, lack of institualization, a quest to develop the self, and acceptance and encouragement of diversity. Paganism is sometimes referred to as Neo-Paganism to emphasise its connections to as well as difference from pre-Christian Religions.[10]

Thus the Western Neo-Paganism today could be seen in line with the New Age as part of a wider syncretic movement which promotes religious subculture with particular references to feminism, environmental protection, body awareness ("feel

[6] YEMELIANOV in *Russkaia Pravda* Nr. 3, 1994, quoted in SHNIRELMAN 1998b: 6.

[7] STARK–BAINBRIDGE 1985: 199.

[8] Yet, it is interesting that the gathering originally announced as the *World Congress of Pagan Religions* and held in Vilnius, Lithuania, from 20 to 24 June 1998, changed its name to *World Congress of Ethnic Religions*. The declaration released by the delegates promoted religious diversity and emphasised both environmental and ethnic aspects. It said: *All cultures and all native religions and faiths should be equally valued and respected. Each region and each people have their distinctive local traditions (native faith, world outlook, mythology, folklore etc.) which articulate their love of their land and history, and cultivate a regard of sacredness of all life and divinity of Nature. We believe that the dawn of a new era of individual and intellectual freedom and global exchange of views and information gives us an opportunity to start again to return to our own native spiritual roots in order to re-claim our religious heritage. We are worshippers of Nature just as whole mankind was, for the last 96% of its history.*

[9] ADLER 1985: 459.

[10] http://www.bloomington.in.us/~pen/mpagan.html. As on 29.02.00.

good" religion), alternative healing, benevolent ("white") magic and the like. They may have links with the Green movement, but are otherwise politically passive.

Inter-war pre-Christian revivalism was a very different religious phenomenon. Neither adherents in Germany, nor the groups in the Baltic States, who tried to revive what they considered to be the authentic religions of their nations, considered themselves Pagans. The basis for the reanimation of the lost gods was usually found in either mythological texts or medieval chronicles or – as in the Latvian case – in folklore. The ethnic (sometimes racial) and cultural aspects were emphasised, but nature was an issue of considerably less, if any, importance. Present day Neo-Pagans are usually at ease with the fact that the rituals they practice are of their own creation. In the case of the inter-war period revivalists we are dealing with so called "invented tradition" – seemingly ancient, but in reality recent, deliberately constructed and formally introduced procedures and ethnic markers appearing within a brief period of time and conditioned, in E. HOBSBAWM's words, *"to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past."*[11] Hence, for the purpose of the present analysis I will use the term "pre-Christian revivalism" as preferable to "Neo-Paganism".

The right-wing movements that were politically active in the Baltic States during the inter-war period were related in terms of their nationalist zeal and criticism of the weaknesses of the parliamentary democracy. Before the authoritarian regimes were imposed in their respective countries they attacked the corruptive nature of the political parties and promoted the idea of an integrated nation-state under the leadership of a directly-elected president; afterwards, they attacked the leaders of their countries for being too moderate, i.e. "soft" on what they saw as enemies of their nations. Although the Baltic right had their vision of the economic development of their countries, they still did not focus on economic policy.

The Lithuanian political organisation which would qualify as a right-wing movement, *Geležinis Vilkas* (the Iron Wolf) was initiated in 1927 by the authoritarian government which had in its turn been formed after a *coup d'état* in the previous year. Formally, the Lithuanian president Smetona was its chief while the real control was in the hands of the prime minister Augustinas Voldemaras. The organisation was officially registered as a sports club, while the government's intention had been to develop it into a national guard. *Geležinis Vilkas* never had a mass following and remained somewhat clandestine until it was reorganised into the Lithuanian Nationalists' party *(Lietuviu Nacionalistu Partija)* while some of its membership remained loyal to Voldemaras (dismissed in 1929) and continued its activities illegally and on limited scale. For the purpose of this analysis it is noteworthy that neither the "Wolves" nor their successors had religious values or experiences high on their priority lists. The Lithuanian Nationalists' Party supported the separation of church and state, while nonetheless regarding *"religion as a virtue"*.[12] To the best of my knowl-

[11] HOBSBAWM 1983: 1.
[12] MISIUNAS 1970: 102.

edge, the members of *Geležinis Vilkas* remained indifferent to the ideas of the pre-Christian revivalists.[13]

As the name itself suggests, *Eesti Vabadussõjalaste Liit*[14] (the Estonian War of Independence Veteran's League, hereafter EVL) was founded by veterans of the Estonian War of Independence (1918–20). The organisation appeared under the name *Eesti Vabadussõljalaste Keskliit* (The Estonian War of Independence Veterans' Central League) in 1929 and changed the name to its shorter version in 1933.

Originally only individuals who had taken part in the War of Independence were accepted to full membership but after 1932 the membership was opened up to those sharing the ideas of the movement and the "spirit of the War of Independence". The movement became a political party later the same year. The Veterans attempted several constitutional amendments by means of initiating referendums. The above mentioned "spirit of the War of Independence" was the bedrock of EVL's ideology, meaning *"patriotism, honesty and readiness to suffer"*.[15] One may say that EVL followed an idea of collective salvation through political activity – the process that had started by the Veterans' shared sacrifice at the battlefield.

Although EVL had no formal connection to any of the Christian Churches in the country, the Veterans often used Christian rhetoric and associated themselves with the ethic values represented by the teaching of the Christian Church.[16] League's newspaper *Võitlus* (Struggle) stressed that *"our new Estonia must tie itself to the church and provide it with the widest opportunity to disseminate Christ's Gospel"*.[17] The Veterans started their meetings with a prayer led by a Lutheran and/or Orthodox priest in commemoration of their fallen comrades. Generally EVL contrasted themselves favourably with the secularism and materialism of other political parties. The latter, in their turn, accused EVL of entering into some kind of conspiracy with the aim of according broader privileges to the Lutheran Church. This was repeatedly disclaimed by EVL.

Like in case of their Lithuanian counterparts, the Veterans' ideology bore no reference to the activities of the Estonian pre-Christian revivalists, the movement identifying itself as *Taara usk* (Taara creed). The latter originated in 1925 and proposed the worship of Old Estonian thunder-god Taara[18] with an aim of laying some

[13] The Lithuanian pre-Christian revivalism, the "Romuva Belief" was inspired by the works of the writer and philosopher Vydūnas but was still a marginal phenomenon during the inter-war period. The movement, revitalised in 1967, is presently much stronger. See more on it in: RAMOŠKAITE-SVERDIOLIENE 1996.

[14] The most detailed study of the movement currently available is the doctoral dissertation of Estonian historian Andres KASEKAMP (KASEKAMP 1996). I am also grateful to him for information and discussions on various aspects of EVL.

[15] *Võitlus* on 22 April, 1933, quoted in KASEKAMP 1996.

[16] See KASEKAMP 1996: 116–118.

[17] *Võitlus* on 1 August, 1933, quoted in KASEKAMP 1996: 117.

[18] *"Taara, avita!"* (Taara, help!) is a phrase once mentioned in the Henricus Chronicle Livonicum, a medieval chronicle devoted to the events in Livonia (Northeast Latvia) and Estonia. There is no other reference to such a deity in the Estonian sources.

kind of new foundation to the support of the Estonian statehood.[19] It is interesting that Kustus Utuste, one of the leaders of the movement, was actually a military man and a veteran of the War of Independence. However, he never joined EVL.

Remarkably, the ties between the Lutheran Church and the radical right in Finland were even stronger. The Lapua movement (1929–32) and its successor, *Isänmaalinen kansanliike* (Patriotic People's Movement) even described their activities as religious crusades. This has been attributed to the impact of the Pietist tradition in Ostrobothnia, the area where the Lapua movement had originated.[20]

The Latvian movement that bore certain similarities to EVL, *Pērkonkrusts* (Thundercross), emerged in 1932, originally under the name *Ugunskrusts* (Fire cross).[21] When the Prime Minister Ulmanis declared the state of siege on 15 May 1934, all political parties were banned following the dissolution of the Parliament. From then on, *Pērkonkrusts* was one of the few political organisations that continued their activities illegally. In fact, the members of *Pērkonkrusts* had been on and off the legal political scene for all the time of its existence.[22] The organisation was founded by the former members of several political movements, mostly *Latvju Nacionālais Klubs* (the Latvian National Club), that had been active during the twenties and then banned as paramilitary organisations threatening the public order. *Ugunskrusts* was banned by the Riga Regional Court in a year after its appearance and had to re-emerge under a different name. Not surprising then, that compared to their Estonian counterparts *Pērkonkrusts* members were to a lesser degree involved in legal political activity, like initiating constitutional changes or standing for the parliament elections. The organisation described its chief goal as "Latvia for the Latvians" and proposed their political principles as follows:

> 1. Supreme power in Latvia belongs to the Latvian people.
> 2. The good of the nation is of higher value than individual freedom.
> 3. The premise of the state economy is the inner colonisation of the nations resources.
> 4. A state president elected by the people for five years, a parliament for the representation of commerce, a government subordinate to the president.[23]

The driving personality and the chief spokesperson of the organisation was Gustavs Celmiņš, a young civil servant. One of the movement's peculiarities was its

[19] See VÄSTRIK 1996: 99.
[20] See KASEKAMP 1999: 593.
[21] Both are Latvian names for swastika.
[22] See PAEGLIS 1994.
[23] G. CELMIŅŠ's speech of 17.09.33, published in *Pērkonkrusts* on 24.09.33, here quoted from GRIFFIN 1995: 217.

strong animosity towards ethnic minorities,[24] particularly the Baltic Germans and Jews. The Germans were a former dominant minority in Latvia and still retained a considerable social and economic influence, as well as an impact on the intellectual and cultural life. Jews were often found in medical and legal professions, arts, and also in trade. All problems in the country were thus blamed on minorities. *Pērkonkrusts* rejected the civil definition of the Latvian nation and insisted on granting all political rights solely to the ethnic Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians living in the country.

Another feature of *Pērkonkrusts* was its close links with the pre-Christian revivalists in Latvia. The name "Thundercross" itself was reportedly coined by Ernests BRASTIŅŠ,[25] one of the key figures in the history of Latvian nationalism. BRASTIŅŠ was also the founder and leader of the *Dievturi* ("those who keep the God"), a pre-Christian revivalist movement in Latvia. It emerged as a religious community in 1926 and originated, in BRASTIŅŠ's words, in response to the growing discontent of the Latvian intelligentsia with Christianity, secularisation and the spread of Marxist ideas.[26] BRASTIŅŠ aimed to reconstruct what he considered to be the Old Latvian religion and introduce it as the official religion of the Latvian state. Christianity was, in his opinion, a religion created by Jews and forcibly imposed on Latvians by Germans. Therefore he considered it alien to the Latvian soul. BRASTIŅŠ was not treading on entirely new grounds. An earlier attempt to revitalise the religion lost through the centuries of forced Christianisation was made by Juris Lecis, a teacher who had tried to organise a non-Christian congregation in Jelgava during the World War I and also published a couple of pamphlets on the Old Latvian religion. His efforts received little public response. The social situation was not favourable as Latvia had not yet gained independence and the personal qualities of Lecis were not of a charismatic leader. Ernests BRASTIŅŠ (1892–1942), in contrast, possessed those gifts in abundance. He was an artist and a military man by training, educated at the Stiglitz School of Design and Emperor Paul's Military College, both in St. Petersburg. BRASTIŅŠ served briefly in the Russian army before the October Revolution of 1917 and joined the Latvian regiments during the War of Independence (1918–20). After the war BRASTIŅŠ got involved in numerous projects. He was employed by the Board of Monuments (an organisation in charge of the preservation of the national heritage) and put all then known Latvian castle-mounds on the map – BRASTIŅŠ was an amateur archaeologist. He was granted a scholarship from the Latvian Folklore

[24] According to the *Pērkonkrusts* ideologues, the ideal Latvian state would have no minorities at all. Remarkably, Thundercross did not consider the Estonians and Lithuanians minorities and generally supported the idea of Baltic unity.

[25] It is not entirely clear whether BRASTIŅŠ was himself a member of *Pērkonkrusts*. According to A. ŠILDE, an expatriate Latvian historian who had himself been a member of the organisation, he was. (ŠILDE 1988). When interrogated by the KGB in 1941, he denied his membership in *Pērkonkrusts* and stated that his only connection was two lectures on the origins of the Latvian nation and religions he had delivered to the members of the organisation (see PELKAUS 1992: 26). In this BRASTIŅŠ was obviously – and for understandable reasons – not telling the truth.

[26] BRASTIŅŠ 1936: 13.

Archives to prepare an index of the mythological names in the Latvian folk songs. BRASTIŅŠ painted pictures, published books and articles on fine arts and ethnography, and tried to introduce a new style in painting, which he called "instinctivism". He was briefly the director of the War Museum in Riga. And above all, he was a keen polemist when it came to the national issues. He was also known for his love affairs and uninhibited temper and tolerated no alternative opinion. BRASTIŅŠ's picturesque personality has been portrayed in several Latvian novels.

Although formally recognised by the Ministry of Justice as a religious organisation, the *Dievturi* communion was still lacking doctrine and rituals in 1926. BRASTIŅŠ was a man of little religious education but he grasped intuitively the necessary features of the religion he was trying to formalise. In about five years time he provided the holy scriptures, the doctrine and the liturgy of the *Dievturība*. BRASTIŅŠ published a three-volume selection of Latvian folk-songs – *Latvju Dievadziesmas* (1928), *Latvju tikumu dziesmas* (1929) and *Latvju gadskārtas dziesmas* (1929). Sometimes ironically called "The *Dievturi* Bible", they contained songs about gods, virtues and seasonal rites. The *Dievturi* catechism, modelled on the Small Catechism of Martin Luther, came out in 1932.[27] The *Dievturi* doctrine was highly syncretic[28] and at times self-contradictory. It, or rather, he – as BRASTIŅŠ was the only creator of the doctrine, combined ardent denial of the Christian creed and various borrowings from it. BRASTIŅŠ proposed the veneration of three deities – *Dievs* (God), *Māra* (a female counterpart of God, in folklore – the Latvian name of St Mary) and *Laima* (the goddess of destiny), whom he interpreted as three persons of the same Ultimate Reality. He strongly objected to the concept of sin and, subsequently, to the notions of atonement and salvation. In BRASTIŅŠ's understanding, the Latvians were virtuous simply because they were Latvians and his goal of the "Latvianised Latvia" – a concept very close to *Pērkonkrusts* "Latvia for Latvians" – was therefore seen as the fulfilment of the sacred mission of the *Dievturi* community. He repeatedly emphasised that the Nation is of higher value than the God or individual. A great part of the *Dievturi* writings described the glorious pre-Christian past and discussed the Indo-European ancestry of the Latvians. BRASTIŅŠ views could also be described as the "flight from history".[29] Although he was fully cognisant that the new religion is his own brainchild, he at the same time considered the Latvian culture and religion to remain unchanged through the centuries of the German and Russian rule. This assumption was used to support the view of the *Dievturība* as the only and true Indo-European religion. All Europe, BRASTIŅŠ claimed, had for centuries waited for its recovery.

The political programme of the *Dievturi* (and probably BRASTIŅŠ's personal political aspirations, too) was revealed by BRASTIŅŠ as follows:

[27] BRASTIŅŠ 1932.
[28] See BEITNERE 1995.
[29] See MISĀNE–PRIEDĪTE 1997: 162-3 and PRIEDĪTE 1999: 242-3.

> Hence, our people's virtues could become the basis for healthy national policy. Any policy, understandably, presupposes that form of statehood, which could fulfil its ethical ideals most successfully. It is immediately evident that democracy in its present form does not appeal to the *dievturi.* Under democracy many presently rule who do not know how to rule, are incompetent to rule and do not desire to rule. Those rule to whom noble ideas are alien and who care only for their own welfare. It is clear that in a democratic society where decisions are taken after a secret vote of the majority, the laws and regulations would always be placed beneath the ultimate good and desideratum. Therefore only the virtuous, godly individual should be given power in the state, one who knows, is able and competent to lead the Latvian people towards the higher divine ideals. The form of statehood where the supreme temporal as well as spiritual power is concentrated in the hands of the same person is called theocracy. The national state shaped by the ideology of *Dievturība* can be none other than theocratic. The bad and the imperfect will have to surrender to the good and the righteous.[30]

The *Dievturi* rituals were plain. The community gathered regularly on Sunday mornings for the "praise meeting", called *"daudzinājums"* in Latvian. They sang folksongs and listened to *kokle* (a Latvian traditional musical instrument, similar to Finnish *kantele*). Speeches, addressing various doctrinal aspects and/or current issues, were also delivered. The *Dievturi* also met for outdoor seasonal festivities, like Midsummer Eve and other solstice celebrations. Particular rites of passage were introduced for child-births, weddings and funerals.

The *Dievturi* and *Pērkonkrusts* thus shared similar values and approaches to social issues. A number of individuals were members of both organisations and, according to the files of the Latvian Political Police,[31] after 1934 the *Dievturi* also provided cover for *Pērkonkrusts* meetings. In 1936, BRASTIŅŠ denoted an impressive sum of 1000 Lats – hardly possible to be his personal savings – to *Pērkonkrusts.* The police undercover had also witnessed *Pērkonkrusts'* members having meetings behind closed doors at the venue where *Dievturi* religious services were meanwhile held.[32]

The question to ask at this point is: why the religious affiliations of the Estonian and Latvian right were so different? Part of the explanation might be found if we comprehend that those were different types of the right-wing movements. Although EVL and *Pērkonkrusts* are both usually branded as the radical right,[33] I would argue

[30] BRASTIŅŠ 1929: 11.

[31] The Latvian political police had both *Dievturi* and *Pērkonkrusts* under observation after 1934 and their archive (which was most likely the source of information when the KGB seized their files in 1940) holds enough evidence as to the links of both organisations (Latvian State Historical Archive 3235-2/5868).

[32] Ibid.

[33] KASEKAMP 1998.

for qualifying *Pērkonkrusts* as the extreme rather than radical right. Roger EATWELL who has analysed the styles of thought of the right describes five different types – the *reactionary right,* the *moderate right,* the *radical right,* the *extreme right,* and the *new right.*[34] The first two, he argued, developed earlier as responses to eighteen century thought, namely liberalism and individualism, while the radical and extreme right *"were more developments of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; they sought specific response to the rise of socialist movements, in particular their more economic, end-state concerns."*[35] Thus the radical and extreme right understandably share certain similarities. In the case of the Baltic States, both EVL and *Pērkonkrusts* were idealistic, somewhat irrational movements. They had a vision of nation as true community and did not focus on economic programmes, but sought the mass mobilisation on the national grounds cutting across the class structure of the society. Both movements were extremely critical of the left. However, the styles of thought and, I would add, the manner of their presentation varied a lot. In EATWELL's view, *"a defining characteristic of the extreme right is the paucity of its intellectual tradition. The reactionary, moderate and radical right have produced significant political theorists. The extreme right has tended more to produce propagandists, interested in telling people what to think rather than how to think, and lacking in originality."*[36] This description fits Thundercross perfectly. Further EATWELL referred to more features – anti-Semitism and drawing on the conspiracy theory – characteristic of the extreme right but not associated with the radical right. The above features were found with both the *Dievturi* and *Pērkonkrusts.*

Further, EVL and *Pērkonkrusts* had different perceptions of history, although *the Past* was crucial entity for both organisations. History is always of paramount importance for the nationalist movements. As Anthony SMITH has pointed out –

> It is history, and history alone, which can furnish the bases of ethnic identity and the psychic reassurance of communal security that goes with it [...] it is not the amount of such history, or even its dramatic value, that is important; what nationalists require from their historical researches is the definition of an ethnic atmosphere, unique to that community, and the provision of moral qualities (and heroic embodiments) peculiar to the group.[37]

EVL referred mainly to the recent history. The members of the organisation shared a particular experience – participation in the War of Independence, which served as a point of departure for all their ideology and superiority claims. The War of Independence was still remembered by the Estonians in the thirties and probably that was exactly the reason why the Veterans chose to evoke it.

[34] EATWELL 1985: 63.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid, p. 17.
[37] SMITH 1976: 8.

Pērkonkrusts, in their turn, bet everything on what nobody could possibly remember, an absolutely unrealistic ideal – Latvia without minorities. For that purpose they needed a pattern that could be found nowhere in modern history and had to be sought in the times immemorial – in the invented image of the *Latvia Felix* and the distant glorious Indo-European past. BRASTIŅŠ's thus provided exactly what the *Pērkonkrusts'* ideologues were missing. His anti-Christian zeal also favoured the myth of the unjust treatment of the Latvian nation through history as the Christianisation of Latvia in the 13th century coincided with the loss of political independence.

EVL needed nothing of this. Their discourse, in contrast, saw the deaths and suffering at the battlefields during the Independence War as purposeful acts. It also drew strongly upon the value of sacrifice. The Christian religion (in its Lutheran form, traditional to the country) was an understandable choice – the Veterans needed a religion that gives strength in suffering.

It seems that the extreme right politicians are more likely to make the choice of pre-Christian revivalism and the radical right would rather prefer the Protestant Christianity.[38] It is difficult to tell, how would the relationship of the religious and the political right ideologies develop, had Estonia been a predominantly Catholic country. The radical ideologies in some European countries, Spain and Austria being examples, had formed links with the Catholic Churches.[39] However, it seems that the Protestant Churches are more prone to develop intellectual, and sometimes also institutional, ties with the right-wing politics. There are few reasons for that. In his analysis of the encounter of Christianity and what he calls three quasi religions (nationalism, socialism/communism and humanism) Paul TILLICH has pointed to the positive evaluation of the secular realm by Protestantism:

> Protestantism is more open to and, consequently, a more easy pray of the quasi religions. The Roman Church has denied to all three types of quasi-religion all *religious* significance. Its positive evaluation of the secular makes the relationship of Protestantism to quasi-religion much more dialectical and even ambiguous. Protestantism can receive and transform the religious elements of the quasi-religions..., it has also partly – though never totally – succumbed to their radicalised forms.[40]

The Protestant Churches came into existence together with the application of the vernacular languages to the intellectual discourse (services held in the national languages, translations of the Bible, etc.). The importance of the national issues in general is greater in Protestant Churches than in the Catholic Church. Protestant

[38] I refer here to the European developments. There were, though, the right-wing political movements outside the Christian world – the Japanese fascism, for example. The discussion of those is, however, beyond my competence.

[39] See SMITH, D. 1970: 14–16.

[40] TILLICH 1961: 48–49.

Churches are also in many cases structured along the national lines, especially in smaller countries. By definition, there can be no state Catholic Church in any country. This is another reason why the Protestant Churches are easier to penetrate for any ideas, but particularly the nationalist ones.

At the same time, we should not pass unnoticed that the pre-Christian revivalism movements in many countries during the inter-war period, and definitely in Latvia were formalised according to the Protestant pattern. This is one more reason to discriminate it from the present day neo-Paganism which is doctrinally more flexible and does not have an idea of the "one true creed". It was mentioned earlier that BRASTIŅŠ modelled his catechism on Luther's seminal text. This is not surprising as BRASTIŅŠ and all other leaders of the movement came from (nominal) Lutheran families. The hostility of the *Dievturi* was considerably greater towards the Lutheran Church and less extended to the Catholics – the fact which is, in itself, highly suggestive. The Lutheran theologians, in their turn, returned the animosity – several of them published articles against the *Dievturība.* Cold as their relationship were, both groups understood what their opponents were talking about as they shared common terminology. At the same time there was almost no reference to the *Dievturi* movement in the Catholic press – the pre-Christian revivalists were not taken serious. The style of discourse applied by the pre-Christian revivalists was in itself very Protestant. They understood the Truth as something that had to be recovered and purified (through the study of the folklore texts, in the Latvian case), rather than created. Such an approach could only come into being in a culture that was shaped by the Protestant Church. I believe that the impact of the Reformation on the origins and development of the European nationalism – often seen as a victorious rival of the Church – had been far more greater than is immediately evident.

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THE CORRELATION BETWEEN RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY – THE PARTICIPANTS OF STUDENT PROTEST IN BELGRADE 1996/97

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Abstract: The aim of this research is to find out in what degree religious identity in Serbian society has become a self-governed identity, a kind of an identity for itself, or, in what degree it is still part of national identity. Is the religious belonging (religious identity) a reliable mark of ethnicity and, if so, in what measure? The research has been done on the participants of student protest (SP) in Belgrade in winter 1996/97. The relationship between religious belonging (religious identity) and national identity is observed in relation to universal processes of cosmopolitization, individualization and retraditionalization.

Keywords: national identity, religious identity, student protest, individualization, tradition

There is a religious aspect concerning the distinction between the terms "individuality" (inseparable element of society) and "personality" (self-conscious and free creative subject). Paraphrasing BERDJAJEV, we can say that ethnic religion originates in the community of individuals, and universal religion of Christian type in the community of personalities.[1] The concept of universal religion can be considered, according to Jung, as a more developed form than the concept of ethnic religions.[2] One of the interesting, but empirically inadequately explored issues, is identifying, if possible, the reflection in religion of some problems such as forming and development of the individuality into personality; the relation of the individual to collective and ethnic culture and tradition, differences in relation among mentioned problems between (conditionally speaking) individualities and personalities and disintegration within ethnic community.[3]

The ideal model of ethnic group implies acceptance of the same religious form – ethnic religion by all the members of a certain ethnic group; social and ethnic community coincide with religious community; meaning that religious identity is a part of ethnic identity. In many areas in the past, ethnic identity implied certain religious

[1] See N. BERDJAJEV, "Ljudska licnost i marksizam" ("Human Personality and Marxism"), in "Komunizam i krscani" (Communism and Christians), Zagreb, 1937, 164–187; also see in New Testament, "The Epistle to Colossians III" (9–11); also see K. G. JUNG, Psihologija i alhemija (Psychology and Alchemy), Zagreb, 1984, 42–43; also in BAHTIJAREVIC, Religijsko pripadanje u uvjetima sekularizacije drustva (Religious Belonging in the Conditions of Secularity of Society), Zagreb, 1975, 13.

[2] See K. G. JUNG, Psiholoske rasprave (Psychological Debates), Novi Sad, 1977, 132.

[3] See Z. BAUMAN, "From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity", in Questions of Cultural Identity, ed. S. HALL and P. DU GAY, London, 1997, 18–36.

belonging. Disintegration of ethnic identity existed, but it was within ethno-religious ideology. Within nations with strong ethnic features, so called 'belated nations', such as Serbia, religious disintegration and religious pluralism are weaker and they have narrower paths than within more developed nations. That is why the problem of connection between ethnic and religious belonging among the Serbs today is very interesting but fairly unexplored. I wanted to establish the connection between religious identity and the degree of achieved individuality, in fact the degree of achieved self-identity.

To achieve the goal set, we need to classify the various relations toward religion (to establish the existence of various layers within religious identity of Serbs), to measure the ethnicity of those layers, and then compare the results.

I searched for the interviewees among the members of the Student Protest 1996/97 in Belgrade for several reasons.[4] They showed with their effort to influence social, political and national problems that they have a certain shape of national identity. Recent research of this population shows that it is very open to new ideas,[5] and it is logical to presume that the sample studied is more exposed in comparison to the average population. I presumed that this population could give more complete replies than other populations, because of its educational level and of being well informed. By studying orientations and attitudes of the youth, the future development of society can be foreseen in a certain way. This population is interesting because their age is often a period when durable attitudes towards religion are formed.[6]

The research was done in special surroundings, in many ways. The Serbs in the past were monoconfessional, and a certain form of religion (Orthodox Christianity), represented the core of their ethnic consciousness and their ethnic identity;[7] any change of the religion was often followed by the change of nationality,[8] after some time. "Orthodox Serb", has become a concept not only referring to national and confessional belonging, but also to religious purity and originality. The complex "chosen nation" has become deeply rooted in the Serbian collective psyche.

Historical circumstances (five centuries of Turkish occupation) stopped the development of Christian consciousness, which was evident in medieval Serbia. Bio-

[4] Student Protest was a protest against irregularity in local elections in Serbia.

[5] See B. KUZMANOVIC, Setnjom u slobodu – vrednosne orijentacije i politicki stavovi ucesnika Studentskog protesta 96/97, u Ajmo, ajde, svi u setnju – gradjanski i studentski protest 96/97 (Walking into Freedom – Value Orientations and Political Attitudes of the Members of Students' Protest 96/97, in Let's all of us go for a walk – civilian and student protest 96/97), Belgrade, 1997, 58–59.

[6] V. JEROTIC, Hriscanstvo i psiholoski problemi coveka (Christianity and Psychological Problems of Man), Belgrade, 1997, 103.

[7] Foreign observers noticed a long time ago that the Serbian Orthodox Church is "the essential expression of Serb nationalism", and "The Serb Church exercised a nationalistic rather than a religious leadership". M. RISTOVIC, "Socijalna struktura Jugoslavije – jedna analiza britanskog Foreign Office Research Department-a s kraja 1944, godine" (Social Structure of Yugoslavia – a research done by British Foreign Office Research Department, end of 1944), in Annual of Social History, Year 2, Book 1, Belgrade, 1995, 104–117, 115.

[8] See J. CVIJIC, Balkansko poluostrvo (The Balkan Peninsula), Belgrade, 1987, 176.

logical survival and nourishing cultural identity were the reasons why the Christian Church was integrated into national culture and became the extreme intercessor of national interests. That was the condition, which caused the institution of the Church to be profane, resulting in the nationalisation of Christian symbols and revitalisation of pagan religion. A ritual type of worshippers was developed in Serbia as the dominant type. That is the type of worshipping with a modest knowledge of religious studies, and showing the state of being religious by the practice of religious customs established by tradition. Religion was not closely connected with sacral institutions. The cult of ancestors[9] had an important place in religious life of the type.

The formal discarding of communist pseudo Christian ideology at the end of the eighties, was logically followed by an emotionally charged return to traditional ethnic religion, wrapped in Christian symbols, and a new return to tradition. But not all the members of the nation participated in this; in fact not all of them accepted it with the same intensity. Disintegration of religious identity became evident, because of enlarged individuality, because of different beliefs in religious function, and because of the difference in the achieved degree of development of religious consciousness, and consciousness itself. Serbian ethnos became disintegrated not only in a religious, but also, in a general cultural way. The basic moments in the history of religion of the Serbs can be summed up as: slow forming of old Slav religion, acceptance of the Eastern version of Christianity in the Middle Ages, religious reaction in the form of the Bogomil movement in the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, many centuries of exposure to Islam and Catholicism and becoming a part of them and finally the acceptance of communism as a pseudo religious ideology in the second half of the twentieth century.

The particularity of the group studied means that unsolved ethnic and national problems have been existing ever since, and that confessional belonging is often the key element of national belonging.

Results of recent research show that there was a dominant process of secularisation[10] concerning the student population in the period between 1945 and 1980. Since 1980, or several years before, there has been an increased number of worshippers (believers) and a decline in the number of atheists; that means that the process of theisation[11] has begun. In the group of students questioned, there are 12% more

[9] See PAVICEVIC, Sociologija religije sa elementima filozofije religije (Sociology of Religion with the Elements of Philosophy of Religion), Belgrade, 1980, 188 ff.; and V. CAJKANOVIC, O magiji i religiji, (About Magic and Religion), Belgrade, 1985, 264.

[10] According to many researches, Belgrade is the most secular area in Serbia. See D. B. DJORDJEVIC, Studenti i religija (Students and Religion), Nis, 1987, 29.

[11] There are data for the student population in Split, in Croatia for the period 1969–1980; I believe that the process is much the same, it may be said that it was even stronger in Serbia. More data about the research in Split can be found in S. VRCAN, Studenti i religija, izmedju cvrste povezanosti za religiju i masovnog otudjivanja od religije (vezanost studenata Sveucilista u Splitu za religiju) (Students and Religion: between a sort of relation to religion and massive alienation from it (relation of students from the Split University to religion), Sociology 1–2, Belgrade, 1981. Since 1980, the number of worshippers in Serbia has doubled, and the number of atheists has halved. Thorough data can be found in D. B. DJORDJEVIC, op. cit.

interviewees who are now more religious than those who are less religious in comparison to the previous part of their life.

The student population within the Serbian society is specific because it was formally more non-religiously and secularly established in comparison to the average population. Apart from being different from the average for the Serbian nation, it is different according to its religious identity from populations of the same kind in different areas: it was, in comparison to the same population in Split in the eighties, non-religious and/or atheist.[12]

Samples were 218 students attending almost all Belgrade faculties and several colleges, including the Theological Faculty of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The ratio of women and men was 51%: 49%; according to permanent addresses, the interviewees are from all parts of FRY (almost two thirds from Belgrade), and several from the Republic Srpska (in Bosnia); 95% are Serbian and 5% Montenegrin nationality, by objective ethnic criterion. Interviewees were chosen at random. The number of interviewed students, according to some estimations, represents about 0.5% of all the participants of student protest. To give better access into the matter, two smaller groups were interviewed afterwards, using a modified questionnaire: one group had 66, and the other 78 students from different faculties. The sample was not representative for the whole student population: the conclusion according to research upon this sample leads to tendencies and orientations.[13]

Interviewees see and search for an aim, comfort and help for life orientation in religion. They also see salvation, meaning, and the possibility to direct and control energy, a connection with the past. Religion means for them the possibility of observing only one aspect of reality. They believe that the Church is not the same as before or what it should be. According to many of them, the Serbian Orthodox Church changed into a solely national institution, replacing religious activity, and the clergy is morally corrupted. That is why a great number of interviewees, although religious, are against the church, church organization and the clergy: they believe that mediators between God and man are not needed any more, and they try to build their personal relation with God free from any models. Many interviewees tend to build their relation with God, which is based on rational beliefs and scientific facts, and which is not based on strict obedience and mystical getting accustomed. The term "God" is connected with the sphere of noumenal, and his actions in the phenomenal world are not distinctly defined. Individuals make a distinction between individual

[12] Comparing results of research on worshipping among the students in Split (Croatia) in 1980 and results from Nis (Serbia) 1985, we come to the conclusion that the students in Nis were far less religious, in fact that they were more atheists (80% stated that they were non-religious, i.e. atheists). Research in Nis in 1985 shows that students were more non-religious than the rest of the population in that part of Serbia. See S. VRCAN, op. cit., 4 ff; also see D. B. DJORDJEVIC, op. cit., 29 and 62.

[13] See about the methodology of examining religious identity in Š. BAHTIJAREVIC op. cit., Zagreb, 1975; D. B. DJORDJEVIC, op. cit., V. VRATUŠA-ZUNJIC, Odnos verske pripadnosti, religiozne samoidentifikacije i medjuetnicke distance u bivsoj Jugoslaviji krajem osamdesetih, rezime priloga za IV godisnju konferenciju JUNIR-a (Relation of religious belonging, religious self-identification and inter-ethnic distances in former Yugoslavia at the end of the eighties, summary of the text for the Fourth Conference of JUNIR), Niska Banja, 1997.

and collective religion; according to them, individual religion is for contemplative people and the collective one is for the masses. A number of students pray to God when it suits them or when they are in danger, and forget that when everything is all right. Traditional worshippers often make no distinction between these terms: "religion" and "the Church", "Serbian" and "Orthodox", "tradition" and "religious custom". On the other hand, not many of them make a distinction between "atheism" and "agnosticism". Atheism is often understood as a common term, which includes all non-Church forms of religion. Superstition and fortune telling are considered to be the lowest level of religious consciousness and Christianity the highest; according to them, it is not sufficient to belong to Christianity formally, and in that way to be called a Christian. Some of the students see a cultural barrier in Orthodox Christianity which stands in the way of globalism; for them, Orthodox Christianity is the most human, liberal and the most spiritual form of Christianity. Belief that people from the West are spiritually inferior in comparison to the people from the East (the Serbs are included) is far from being uncommon. Others consider Orthodox Christianity as an unsuccessful attempt at keeping the values of early Christianity, in fact a cover for nationalism. Most of the interviewees take part in these traditional rituals. Some of them try in that way to build and keep their own identity, and others consider rituals to be empty forms which are practiced to avoid attracting attention and not to provoke negative reactions from their surroundings. Students are conscious that the old Slav pantheon lives in Orthodox religion. Although, a number of them do not know whether they worship (believe) or not, there is a negligible number who are aloof and who are against religion.

According to some answers it is possible to distinguish several groups of interviewees. First of all, there is a group of interviewees who fully accept the model of religion offered by the Serbian Orthodox Church – we can call them "Church" or "Convinced" Orthodox worshippers or believers (they represent one seventh – 14% of the total number of interviewees). Second, there is a group which accepts eroded or modified forms of Orthodox Christian religion; their relation to the Church is weaker, and often this form is called "folk Orthodox religion" (almost half of the interviewees – 44%).[14] Both church and non-church Serbian Orthodox Christians accept the mixture of Christian and pagan religion, but church ones use more Christian symbols, whereas non-church ones use pagan symbols. As the third group, we have atheists, in fact non-worshippers (22%). The fourth group are worshippers, but their form of being religious is formed in harmony with other models: we can call

[14] It is possible to distinguish four degrees of Church distinction, i.e. religious participation; total acceptance of Church model (14% of interviewees), partial acceptance (12%), acceptance of customs without going to church (15%) and very informal and undefined identification with Church conviction (18%). I formed CWO group from the first group, and WMO group from the other three. For more detail on "folk Orthodox religion" see D. BANDIC, Carstvo zemaljsko i carstvo nebesko, ogled o narodnoj religiji (The Empire of Earth and the Empire of Heaven, experiments about folk religion), second, enlarged edition, Belgrade, 1997, 239 ff., and D. BANDIC, Narodna religija Srba u 100 pojmova (Serbian Folk religion in 100 notions), Belgrade, 1991.

them followers of alternative forms of religion (19%).[15] It is characteristic for all the unconvinced worshippers of Orthodox religion that, they all, in a certain way accept the traditional, Orthodox model of religious life; all the alternative ones are characterized by a non-traditional type of religion.

Most of them accept a modified form of Orthodox religion, and the smallest group are convinced worshippers of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Not many of them are actually connected to Orthodox religion, and there are many of them who are traditionally connected to Orthodox religion, without personal religiosity, and with a clear consciousness about confessional background. There are many of them as well, who accept the confessional background despite the lack of rational sense and being non-religious; they consider the traditional model as a part of their cultural heritage. It is shown in one of the groups interviewed afterwards that full identification with Orthodox Christianity exists only in one fifth of the cases, and full and/or partial in 45% of the interviewees; formal acceptance of traditional religion exists in 83% of interviewees (they declare themselves in certain situations as Orthodox). Full religious identification and religious participation can be found in 14%, and this is the very same percentage of those who would change their religion for a more pleasant life. Clearly defined Orthodox religious identification exists if full Orthodox religious participation is present. Within the group where religious participation is not full, religious identification is heterogeneous and inconsistent. A check with the control group shows that agnostics often declared themselves as atheists, and ritual life atheists and agnostics are often like the life of Orthodox worshippers.

Research on ethnicity demands research on inner and outer aspects of ethnical being (inner homogeneity of the group and the distance towards others). That is why I studied ethnicity in different ways: according to national declaration, scale of national ties, scale of traditionalism, ethnic distance, ethnic stereotypes and auto stereotypes, and with the help of attitudes towards certain social problems.[16] Apart from ethnicity, some other parameters were also taken into account. One of them is authoritarian.

Interviewees from the groups of convinced Orthodox worshippers and worshippers of modified Orthodox religion are more traditional, national and authoritarian than the interviewees from the groups of atheists and alternative ones.[17] Differences

[15] "Alternative" group is formed of non-confessional worshippers (15% of all interviewees), undecided – undefined (4%), and members of small religious sects (1%).

[16] I took scales for researching social attitudes in shortened and modified form from Z. GOLUBOVIC, B. KUZMANOVIC, M. VASOVIC, Drustveni karakter i drustvene promene u svetlu nacionalnih sukoba (Social Character and Social Changes in the Light of National Conflicts), Belgrade, 1995.

[17] I will show results on the scale of authoritarian, scale of traditionalism and the scale of national ties. All the scales included eight statements, and each of them could be answered with one out of five answers: starting with full agreement with the given statement to full disagreement with it. The maximum score on each of these scales was 40 points (maximum authoritarian, i.e. traditionalism, i.e. national ties), and minimum 8 points; the theoretical middle was 24 points, and that was the result which conditionally represented the border between those who were not authoritarian, not traditional and not nationally

in ethnicity among these groups are sometimes minimal, and sometimes significant (for example in the scale of national ties).[18] Religious belonging is a true parameter of ethnic identity only on the group level, if individuals are considered, it should be checked. Certain forms of religious belonging are a true parameter of ethnicity only in comparison to another type of religious belonging, but not true in the absolute sense. This means that people who accept the traditional model of religion have stronger ties to their nation than those who do not accept this model; but it does not mean that followers of the traditional model would always show strong ethnicity.

Full acceptance of the Orthodox model of religiosity is in 5 of 6 cases connected to nationalism; in these cases through religion the nation is glorified. On the other hand, nationally oriented persons, in three quarters of the cases do not fully accept the Orthodox model of religiosity.[19] Almost all of the people who declared themselves to be Orthodox (98.5%) have articulated national identity (they declared themselves national); on the other hand, almost every eighth (12%) interviewee who firmly declared being national, did not declare being Orthodox. More than one third of the interviewees (38%), although formally identified with Orthodox religion, try to fulfil real religious need in some other way.[20]

Interviewees refer to Orthodox religion as one of the basic national institutions and the Serbian Orthodox Church is considered to be one of the basic national organizations. Acceptance of Orthodox religion is not the condition for development of nationalism; in fact Orthodox religion is not the only nucleus of national consciousness; although rare, there are cases when nationalism does not try to find support in religion. Two kinds of nationalism exist: both sacral and profane orientation, and the first one is more numerous. Generally speaking, when the model of being religious is closer to the Church model it is more connected to nationalism, authoritarian and traditionalism. The degree of acceptance of the traditional model of reli-

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connected, on the one side, and on the other side there were those who had these characteristics. Average results on the authoritarian scale are: convinced Orthodox Worshippers (CWO) – 18.7 points; worshippers of modified Orthodox Religion (WMO) – 16.93, alternative (ALT) – 16.90; atheists (non-believers) (ATE) – 14.8. On the scale of traditionalism, the following results were obtained: CWO – 24.7 points, WMO – 23.2; ATE – 22.7; ALT – 21.7. On the scale of national ties, the results were: CWO – 28.2 points; WMO – 25.3; ATE – 22.3; ALT – 20.7. Ethnic distance was also researched, according to readiness to be married to people of other nationalities. In the CWO group there is aversion in 83.9% towards at least one nationality in respect of marrying, in the WMO group 81.4%, ALT – 64.3 and in the group ATE 56.2%.

[18] More than one third of the interviewees, among the characters from Serbian history, admire Nikola Tesla (36%), and less than one fifth (20%) admire St. Sava, founder of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Atheists and alternatives give priority to N. Tesla, interviewees from WMO admire Nikola Tesla more, whereas those from the CWO give priority to St. Sava. Orthodox people admire Greek people from ancient times (because of their developed democracy and spirituality) and religious "non-traditionalists" admire contemporary English people (because of the successful symbiosis of traditional and contemporary culture).

[19] 84% are those who fully accept the Orthodox model of religion and are nationally oriented, i.e. they achieved a higher score than theoretical on the scale of national ties.

[20] 83% of interviewees in the control group declared that they were Orthodox, and only 45% of them accept what their religion preaches.

gion is conversely proportional to the degree of individual emancipation, i.e. the degree of achieved critical attitude towards authorities and tradition and the degree of constructed personal attitude towards reality and independence.

The spectrum of religious identities of interviewees ranges from those who accept the old-fashioned mystic view of the world stressing the cult of ancestors to those who are super-confessional, universally religious. Atheistic orientation is a consequence of the need to purify consciousness from everything that is needless, ideological, imposed and manipulated through centuries; i.e. an attempt at a new religious identification.[21] Greater empathy with elements of universal, more than elements of folk religion, shown by a great number of interviewees, is connected with rejection of the national pattern of culture as a mediator between an individual and universal values.

We can observe several layers within the group of Orthodox worshippers, and the description must depend on generalisation and simplification; these layers interweave and they form different variations. The first layer mostly demands from the church affirmation for doing its pagan, i.e. practically magical praxis: in most cases it does not possess an ideologically developed national consciousness. It does not think about religion, and its religious being is described in stock phrases. The individuality of these people is often of the archaic and egoistical type. The second, partially Christian layer includes people who try with the help of the Church to reconcile Christianity and nationalism; they aspire to transcendentalism, belonging to the nation as a higher entity, and they consider globalism as something, which endangers them. They consciously put their individuality into the service of national ideology. As recent events have shown, they have hard times experiencing the crisis of national values; they tend to identify their own destiny with national destiny. The third layer includes different individually contemplative attempts at transcendentalism. The fourth layer formally accepts the Orthodox model because of the lack of courage to reject it, and personally does not identify with it at all (or only a little).

According to conventional criteria, interviewees are educated, young people, but most of them have an attitude to religion similar to the masses; this attitude is not that of a cultural elite. Despite developed intellectuality (precisely, the ability to use terms for practical purposes), many of them do not show FROMM's understanding of the ability to apprehend, regarding exploring the essence.[22] All of that is reflected in the attitude towards the problem explored, which is often weakly articulated and defined, used term apparatus is often of a modest scope and full of clichés; ready models are accepted without any further elaboration. Although this problem is universal, in the given surroundings it is very indicative.[23]

[21] See V. JEROTIC, op. cit.

[22] See the chapter about sense, conscience and religion in FROMM's book Zdravo drustvo (Healthy Society).

[23] S. JOVANOVIC claims that wisdom and liveliness of Serbian folk sagacity is not deep, analytical wisdom, but it leads to momentary and unilateral conclusions; see S. JOVANOVIC, "Srpski nacionalni karakter, O kulturnom obrascu" u Karakterologija Srba ("Serbian national character", About the cultural pattern, in Characters of the Serbs), ed. B. JOVANOVIC, Belgrade, 1992, 229–242.

The traditional form of religion presents a less religious institution for the interviewees, and more help in defining general cultural identity – in several cases the construction "Orthodox atheist"[24] was used. There is graduation concerning closeness of the ideal model of the "Serb": several interviewees asked about national belonging replied that they were "Orthodox Serbs", considering it to be the top of the national hierarchy. Personal identity of individualised and non-traditional interviewees chose the World for their reference group, but not nation: religion and nationality are not inseparable categories for them. Their nationalism is evident, for example, during international sports events, and it starts as soon as it hinders personal development (even to a small extent). The long period in which the traditional form of religion was deliberately repressed, left consequences. Many interviewees are not familiar with traditional confession. Traditional confession still has certain secrets for them and a mystical attraction, which is connected with the creation of idealised images. They consider "Orthodox religion" and "Serbian nation" as archetypes of universal values, and not actual reality. Only after getting to know and demystification of traditional confession, could these interviewees form a lasting vision of religion.

Non-traditional religious interviewees are against tradition which obligates and restrains, and they are for tradition which enlightens and gives orientation. It is probably going to become clearer when re-traditional impulse weakens. Efforts made by certain structures aiming at making cannons of satisfying religious needs, represent attempts of those structures to achieve survival, and they are against the tendency of achieving positive freedom. They are against the need of the individual to accede the reality spontaneously and according to personal needs. As Mihail NAJMI quoted in the book Mirdad: "Which ancestors can claim the man whose only ancestor is God?"

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FOLK RELIGION – POLITICAL UNDERCURRENTS

(WITH REFERENCE TO INDIA)

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Abstract: To establish some relation between folk religion and politics, one could see that the present scenario in the technologically developed world is somewhat different. Thanks to the advent of knowledge in all spheres of human life and scientific and technological development the social as well as political bearing that religion could exercise on modern folk life, peoples' attitudes are becoming different. In fact, man has unravelled many secrets of nature and has successfully combated a host of impediments he was hitherto facing. This has to a large extent influenced our folks' attitude towards religion. Very often religion and castes are confused with each other and we find that the latter is playing a major role in our present day politics. God, religion and such faiths are very much essential for our folks for their community living and they help people to lead an active and dynamic life. Politics these days is most often banking upon the religious faith of the people which obviously emerges in the form of caste differentiation and they try to find their way through such faiths and convictions. Politics manages to be one with our folks exploiting their faith for its own success and survival. Thus, it pretends to respect and safeguard the interests of religions, of course, eventually to meet its own ends.

It would be interesting to study the various religious customs, beliefs and convictions of our folk life and community observations of fairs and festivals and how political interference, though at times helps, but, most often unwanted and unwarranted, causes undue anxiety and disturbs the peace of the community life. The present paper intends to take up some aspects of this issue for a brief study.

Keywords: folk religion, politics, interference, India

Folk religion depends on beliefs to a large extent. For that matter, every religion has got ideals of its own. Religion can be very well identified in the very totality of life style in our rural setup. But the unfortunate thing these days is that our political system has reduced the universal meaning of religion to a considerable extent. Owing to constrained feelings, the meaning of religion has been disfigured. Religion and caste are being confused with each other. As a result of this, people are looking at religion suspiciously and sceptically. In folklore, people consider family and community as compared to caste and sect. They are not very much bothered about the intricacies of caste, sect, etc. as conceived or construed in urban circles. To facilitate a smooth living, they conceive their own definitions of social and political framework. The significant point is that almost all-folk activities revolve around their religious framework as an axis. Today we have to note one thing. People are developing some type of outward aversion towards religion. A broad-minded secular feeling is undoubtedly good for the ultimate welfare of the society, if it is taken and initiated in good spirit. But, unfortunately, secularism is being projected as a political tool. No

religion in people, no religion in politics, no religion in sports and so on has been the talk of the day on our platforms. The protagonists of such feeling forget one thing. The bare and bitter fact is that instead of religion, politics is intervening into all corners of life and spoiling the whole atmosphere. In fact, religion should be taken as a necessity, as a controlling factor to safeguard the welfare of the society. Because religion plays a dominant role in our folk society, they live peacefully and contentedly. One has to note that folk religion is more human in nature. How it is accepted and what is the ultimate bearing of religion on folk society is significant to note. Because of its simplicity and unstinted nature, folk religion, in reality, is human religion.

Beliefs and customs function as the backbone of folk religion. It is not necessary that there should be any cause and effect relation between these two things. Rarely at times, such beliefs and customs may have a scientific background behind them. Be there any cause and effect relation or not, it is a fact that religion is embedded in beliefs. Birth, marriage, fairs and festivals happen to be occasions to celebrate happiness whereas occasions like diseases and death ceremonies bring people to share their grief. Thus in one way or the other, folk religion has proved to be a way of folk life. It is an exposition of the folk mind. Here thought and action are not different from one another. The influence of folk religion can be vividly seen on our social and political life of the present day.

In a way religion or Dharma pertains to our way of life. If we go on considering more and more on this topic, it tends to become abstract. In booklore Dharma has a special meaning. Most often all these things come under Hindu Dharma. In fact one could feel that to call these things Hindu Dharma itself might not be right. Throughout the ancient religion we do not find any subjectivity or any extraordinary importance given to any person. Several thinkers have given serious thought to the fundamental aspects of life and their experiences, assertions and outlook towards life, which have paved the way to their philosophies. What they all preached comes under Dharma. In case of religions like Christianity and Islam people take the names of Jesus Christ or the Prophet Mohammad. But as far as Hinduism is concerned no such single name could be taken. There might be some exceptions in Jainism and Buddhism, but ultimately they also have merged into the main stream.

If we look at Indian lifestyle and tradition, we find the mainstream of Dharma has influenced everything within its ambit. In spite of this there are so many different subsidiary currents which maintain their own individuality. Such subsidiary currents actually control the whole life pattern of a specific society that follows them. In folk religion, the village deity or the family deity is treated with utmost respect. For almost all happenings in life, the family deity is worshipped and propitiated. Almost all happenings of life right from birth to death are attributed to the family deity or the village goddess. Similarly each and every ritual in our villages goes in the name of some god or goddess. Father and mother (*maatr* and *pitr*) are in the next place of importance.

Another important feature of all folk religion is that no disinterestedness is shown towards worldly life and happiness. The concept of renunciation or *sanyasa* is

unknown to them. Forsaking worldly life and going behind some abstract happiness in the name of renunciation is unknown to them. In fact, the very essence of folk religion would be seen in the observances and performances of our rural milieu. The background of performances or rituals is nothing but faith or belief. In turn, the basis of any faith could be observed in keenness and interest shown by our villages towards worldly life. In toto, folk religion is confined, to a large extent to this world.

The faith exhibited by our rural masses towards rebirth is very much significant. They firmly believe that if one's life were pure in this birth, one would lead a happier life in the next birth. They always believe that some unknown hand controls their entire life as well as social happiness. They imagine the nature and being of that unknown hand or divinity to be as simple and as transparent as their simple life. They try to honestly comprehend all they imagine about such a divinity. Unlike their urban counterparts, they do not have lofty ideas about religion. For them, it is not a separate entity from their life. And hence we do not find our folks indulging in misdeeds like robbery and murder. Even at such exigencies, we find our folks facing the situation nobly and collectively raising themselves well to the situation. We find a lot of generosity among our rural masses even at times of difficulties and distress. They want to see that the Lord or the deity whom they worship gets maximum attention and importance. Even when people considering themselves to be belonging to upper classes engage in disharmony and quarrel, there are instances where our folks have exhibited their protest by way of some traditional folk dances, rituals, ballads and such other forms. The incident that took place in connection with Puri Jagannath Temple may be cited as an example.

In folk religion magic and witchcraft play an important role. They consult magicians to get rid of difficulties and diseases. A magician is often approached to know the cause of any disease. Using spelled ashes (*bhasma*), to get an amulet or a talisman tied on the hand or shoulder, whenever evil spirits exhort any person they are driven away by observing some rituals or chanting some mantras. Such things are still active in our folk society. Even today our folks are very scared of the magic or sorcery which one person may use to spoil another person. Even items pertaining to the usage of magic are considered to be inauspicious. The magic wands of a wizard, an elbow, a skull, a lemon, a needle etc., are considered to be most inauspicious. Even to look at such things is considered to be bad. *Bhanamati* type of incidents could be quite often seen in our northern part of Karnataka. People often share their experiences with all anxieties and apprehensions about the difficulties they faced because of the notorious magicians from places like Kerala and Kollegal. There are also people thinking on the rational level discarding such happenings and experiences. In their view, such experiences are the results of ignorance and illiteracy. They are not prepared to accept this black magic as a science or a skill. In spite of all such rational claims, most of our cities, towns and villages are being continuously flooded with astrologers, babas, divine worshippers claiming to be the descendants of several divinities. Modern science and technology also have their own contribution in this regard projecting computer astrologers using a few strokes on the keyboard and giving a printout of what is in store for the gullible people who approached them.

Because of the involvement of a super machine like the computer, even the learned urban masses are fairly influenced least doubting the authenticity or the prognosticating faculties of the modern magic machine.

There has always been a struggle between science and religion. There are people saying that even a great scientist like Einstein believed in some superhuman power before he came out with his theory of relativity or the well known equation $E = mc^2$. His belief in religion must have been no less than his faith in science. Many modern thinkers might say that there is nothing surpassing human endeavour. They might advocate belief in one's hard work and intellect instead of putting everything in the name of God. Probably they forget that something cannot be achieved to a great extent without having an innate faith in an entity that one firmly believes in. In folk religion, the animal and plant kingdoms as well as several inanimate objects play an important role and such features are being looked at from a modern point of view these days. However, the modern view is more and more practical and business like in nature, probably in every field. People consider items of immediate use to be of relevance. Tomorrows are not important for them.

Scientific thinking, revolutionary advances in technological fields as well as various types of developments in many areas have opened avenues for world level communication. In other words, this has paved the way for a cultural give and take. The impact of religion, wars fought to occupy others' territories and the great losses incurred have made people of the world think in new directions. All these are developments seen during the past one or two centuries. One significant effect of these developments is that people understood the importance of all things around them; they found that no phenomenon is to be discarded totally without due inquiry and examination. Besides modern inventions, our world literature and culture, customs and values have also to be taken into account. As results of such inquiries, many persons of historical importance together with their thoughts and theories have been subjected to a lot of debates and discussions out of which some have survived and others have proved scarcely viable. Those who stand the test of time – whether persons or their contributions – have really transcended the barriers of space and time.

Traditions and customs are being seen both scientifically and otherwise. Something considered scientific today might be turned down as unscientific tomorrow. Just as new things are accepted continuously, old things are being discarded. Often the level and way of discarding things reach culminating heights. This is really dangerous. Probably the present lifestyle and unattached attitude of people may be the reason behind this. In the name of rationalism, people are often becoming so indifferent about their culture, beliefs and customs. In the name of scientific outlook, God and beliefs are being considered as superstitious. Such things eventually are proving to be impediments to viewing things with an overall outlook and taking up an in-depth study.

To conclude, we always find some basic truth behind any belief or custom. Similarly every custom or ritual comes as a part of performance or a celebration. Broadly speaking, no ritual or folk performance is without sense and use. At least, the performing social group would get some consolation and peace of mind by such

things. In the name of cultural activities like fairs and festivals, it will be a nice thing to watch our folks exchanging good will, greeting one another, sharing experiences, mingling culturally and so on. After all what charm could there be in life without such things? If our beliefs and rituals could accomplish this, the purpose is served. Our fairs and festivals and *melas* have their social and political purposes also. They bring people together in all these areas. They find occasions and opportunities to have discussions and exchange views on contemporary world and political matters. Thus we find a lot of influence of folk religion on politics. India being a country of villages, folk religion opens a number of avenues for our people to apprise themselves of the political undercurrents that will be continuously flowing within. Whenever one considers a study of such political undercurrents, one has to be careful enough to consider the aspects of folk religion and its bearing on present day politics in an appropriate and suitable manner.

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LIMINALITY AND COMMUNITAS RECONSIDERED: THE POLITICS OF CASTE AND RITUAL IN GOALPARA, WEST BENGAL*

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Abstract: This paper concerns a local Bengali deity named Dharmaraj, whose worship in eastern India was quite extensive in medieval times. Today, however, ritual performances in his honor are confined to three contiguous districts of West Bengal. This decline in worship is partly due to the co-optation of a predominantly lower-caste deity by Brahmins. The degree to which "Sanskritization" has altered the practices associated with the deity shall be explored in both historical and ethnographic contexts based on medieval Bengali literature and anthropological fieldwork. The aim is to understand how the deity can be manipulated ideologically over time to serve the interests of different caste groups. I wish to sketch the dynamics of how Dharmaraj is currently constructed, interpreted, and understood in one small village – Goalpara – located in Birbhum District, the center of the deity's worship.

To do this, I will present data pertaining to annual puja, or ritual performance, for the deity. Ritual data will be supplemented with exegesis provided to me by a cross section of individuals belonging to various castes within the village. I intend to conclude by suggesting that the deity serves a mediational role in the village by resolving conflicts resulting from caste hierarchy. Moreover, his annual puja, although not levelling social status, displays a strong sense of Turnerian communitas, which allows for a temporary form of egalitarianism in which members of all castes gain access to the deity.

Keywords: Eastern India, Bengal, deity Dharmaraj, ritual performance, community

THE PLACE AND ITS PEOPLE

Goalpara is an all-Hindu community located in the district of Birbhum. It is divided into two directional sectors called Purbapara (eastern neighborhood) and Pashcimpara (western neighborhood). The boundary line between them is a youth club built in a small clearing marked by a tube well. These two major divisions are recognized by residents who often refer to them as major points of orientation within the village. By comparison to other villages in Birbhum, Goalpara is quite small; it is populated by 915 residents living in 166 households. Although the village is numerically and economically dominated by Brahmans, a total of fifteen castes are represented. Brahmans also dominate the village economy due to their landholdings, and

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many of the lower caste members of the village are employed by them as agricultural laborers. While a number of non-Brahmans own land, their plots tend to be much smaller, functioning mostly as domestic gardens. Brahman tracts are considerably larger and require more labor-intensive care in order to yield cash crops such as rice.[1] A reciprocal interdependence is thus created: Brahmans must rely on the services of the lower castes, while lower castes rely on Brahmans for a portion of their income.

Brahmanical dominance is not just limited to the agricultural and economic spheres. Brahmans also control, or are at least tangentially involved in, most of the local ritual activities. The type of Brahmanization that has been occurring in Goalpara is not one-sided, however, for a number of influences also pass in the other direction. This seems to be the case in the Dharmaraj *pūjā*, the topic of this paper, which was a completely low-caste phenomenon for a lengthy period in the past. Now, due to increasing Brahmanical participation, the *pūjā* is slowly taking on a number of Sanskritic features without necessarily sacrificing many of the local practices associated with Dharmaraj (e.g., pig sacrifice and liquor consumption).[2] In other nearby villages that celebrate the Dharmaraj *pūjā*, the degree of Sanskritization has been greater, totally substituting blood sacrifice with the cutting of gourds and the ritual use of alcohol with milk.[3] The replacement of vegetarian sacrifices for blood offerings does not seem to be an issue in Goalpara. Since Brahmans, who eat portions of the sacrificial flesh, feel that they must officiate at the *balidān* (goat sacrifice) on the third and final evening of the *pūjā*, there is no division of opinion on this issue. My own observations coupled with folk exegesis suggest that two sets of rites – one distinctively low caste, the other Brahmanical – exist side by side.[4]

There is a strong sense of caste interdependence in the domain of ritual, but it is also the ritual realm within which social hierarchy is contested. The Dharmaraj *pūjā* is, perhaps, the most compelling example of this in rural Bengal. The *pūjā*, sometimes called *gājan* (thundering) in the region, is an occasion allowing for a great deal of participatory interaction by residents from all economic and occupational streams

[1] It is worth noting here that Dharmaraj also owns 12 *bīghās* (= app. 4 acres) of land controlled by the *dharma sarkār* (Dharma committee). The profit generated by farming this land is used for partially funding the annual Dharmaraj *pūjā*. According to oral history, a wealthy *jamidār* (landholder) from an adjacent village called Taltor donated the land for this purpose.

[2] Almost two decades ago, it was reported that a Dom woman once remarked in conversation during the *pūjā* that Dharmaraj was their caste deity. Once the Brahmans began noticing the increasing popularity of Dharmaraj, however, they consciously decided to become involved in the *pūjā* by asserting their influence in the ritual domain. This is attested by the following statement: "Dharmapuja belongs to the Dom. It is our *puja*. Because the deity is so great, the Brahmans wanted to worship him" (ROHNER and CHAKI-SIRKAR 1988: 110).

[3] The term "Sanskritization" was first coined by the Indian anthropologist M. N. Srinivas in his landmark monograph *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India* (1952). I use the term here in the sense defined by STAAL to signify "a process by which a lower caste attempts to raise its status and to rise to a higher position in the caste hierarchy. Sanskritization may take place through the adoption of vegetarianism, of teetotalism, of the worship of 'Sanskritic deities,' or by engaging the service of Brahmans for ritual purposes" (1963: 261).

[4] For a more extensive discussion of this issue, see KOROM 1999.

of life. In Goalpara, even the outcast leatherworking group known as Ruidas[5] must participate in the *pūjā*, for their drumming is essential to the overall success of the rites for Dharmaraj. As I begin to describe the social structure of ritual specialists, this point will be explored in more depth. For the time being let me just point out that activities on the all-village level, such as the Dharmaraj *pūjā*, display a much stronger sense of Turnerian *communitas* (TURNER 1977: 131–165) than exclusively small-scale caste events. The performance of songs for the rain goddess Bhajo (*bhājo gān*) on the last day of the month of Bhadra by members of the Ruidas caste, for example, is limited to their own demarcated environment. The performances often do not flow beyond the inner, domestic compounds of their homes. Large-scale public display events, however, such as Dharmaraj *pūjā*, happen primarily near the sacred spaces dedicated to this deity within the village, drawing people from all castes into worship.

EMIC GENRES OF DISPLAY

*Pūjā*s in Bengali culture are always sacred events. They are punctuated times for worshipping specific deities; times for Hindus to reaffirm their relationship with the gods and goddesses who play central roles in their lives, thereby insuring the well-being (*kalyāṇ*) of the community in question.[6] The term *pūjā* may be derived from the Sanskrit verbal root – √*pūj'* which literally means "to make pure," "to cleanse," or "to purify" (APTE 1985: 628).[7] The tentative etymology of the word is certainly one aspect of its use in everyday discourse, since there is a cleansing process through worship that renews the community. Concerning *pūjā* in Bengal, Ákos ÖSTÖR has

[5] Ruidas is the Bengali variant of Ravidas, the untouchable Chamar (*camār*) holy man of Banaras. This is the name by which they refer to themselves as a distinct community. According to the caste's sacred oral tradition, they were told to stop eating beef by an emissary of the guru and adopt his name as their caste title in an attempt at upward mobility. However, other people in the village refer to them by their caste title of Bayen (*bāyen*), which was probably attributed to them due to one of their caste occupations as drummers and musicians (cf. SEN 1971.2: 621). Ruidas are also called *mucī* (*cobbler*), another common term for Chamars. On the background of the caste and their customs, see RISLEY 1981.1: 175–182. On Ravidas' life and teachings, see SINGH 1981.

[6] There has been some controversy over the meaning of the term *kalyāṇ*. In her study of prestation in a Hindi-speaking village in Uttar Pradesh, RAHEJA (1988) translates the term as "auspiciousness." ROBINSON (1980: 172) makes a similar assertion regarding the use of the terms *kalyāṇi* and *maṅgal* in Bengali. I find this problematic, however, since she also uses a number of other terms such as *śubh* to mean the same thing. For a comment on the semantic problem in Hindi, see KOROM 1990: 549. While it is true that a major Bengali thesaurus (MUKHOPĀDHYĀY 1990: 237) lists *kalyāṇ* as a synonym for *śubh*, I feel more comfortable translating the former as "well-being," since this rendering is more common in everyday discourse.

[7] The etymology and subsequent meanings of the term *pūjā* have a long history of debate in Indological studies concerning whether or not the term is a Dravidian loanword in Sanskrit (cf. BAILEY 1961; THIEME 1957). Some have even suggested a double origin of the term in both languages. But more recently, RADHAKRISHNAN (1965) has shown linguistically that the word must have been borrowed into Tamil. Whatever the true origin of the word, the meaning still seems clear, and I follow APTE here for conceptual, rather than linguistic, reasons.

stated that "As an idea *puja* expresses a relationship between the human and the divine, earth and heaven. As an act it signifies the way men approach deities: a symbol of offering as much as an expression of the act of offering itself. A system of classification, a logic of categories and a whole philosophy is expressed through the meanings of *puja* symbols" (1982: 21). A philosophy yes, but not one based on printed literature. Rather, residents tend to de-emphasize the centrality of textual narratives in their tradition, favoring instead orally transmitted stories about Dharmaraj's first appearance in the village.

Residents speak of the Dharmaraj *pūjā* in functional terms reminiscent of older anthropological paradigms of myth and ritual proposed by MALINOWSKI (1954). When asked why the rite is performed most residents would respond in two ways. First, people generally say that "we perform the *pūjā* so that we may get happiness" (*jāte āmrā ānanda pāi*). When pressed on the issue they generally provide a cause and effect answer: "We perform *x* in order to get *y*." The *pūjā* therefore has a very pragmatic dimension. Not much time is spent speculating on the nature of Dharmaraj and his worship, yet virtually everyone in Goalpara seems to know something about him, for normative claims concerning him are often expressed in very subtle and sophisticated ways (KOROM 1997b). In many parts of Bengal, the term *gājan* (thundering) is used to refer to the event. This word is only used in a very specific sense in Goalpara today to refer to one performance that occurs during the rites.[8] Instead of *gājan*, the term *melā* is sometimes used interchangeably with *pūjā* when talking about the *dharmānuṣṭhān* (Dharma function or event). But most often *melā* is employed alongside the term *pūjā* to discuss the so-called profane (*apabitra*) dimensions of the overall event.

Melā means "gathering," "meeting," or "assembly" (SEN 1971.2: 778). These connotations are embedded in one of the current uses of the word to mean festival.[9] The Dharmaraj *pūjā* is, in other words, a time for celebration and relaxation as well as spiritual dedication and reflection. It could also be said that *pūjā* demonstrates the willpower of ascetic lack and sacrifice, while *melā* allows for licentious behavior, conspicuous display, and consumption of goods. It is a time, as Roger ABRAHAMS states about the language of festivals, "for bringing out, passing around, for giving and receiving the most vital emblems of culture in an unashamed display of produce" (1982: 161).[10] In this sense, the Dharmaraj *pūjā* transcends sacred and profane,

[8] SEN 1971.1: 218 translates the term literally as "shouting." He himself, however, traces the word to *garjana* (thunder), the form in which it is used in Goalpara to distinguish it from Shiva's *gājan*. It can also be translated as "roar." In the village, the term is used for the rite known as *megh garjan* (cloud thunder).

[9] Etymologically *melā* does not imply the same thing as the Latin *festum* (merriment, revelry), from which the word festival derives. But *melā*s are indeed considered to be occasions for public displays of joy. The qualities and characteristics of *melā*s fit in well with FALASSI's structural typology of festivals as rites of passage, reversal, conspicuous display, and consumption. See FALASSI 1987: 4–5.

[10] While ABRAHAMS is thinking of festival behavior in a more universalized sense, his ideas tie in nicely with Hindu notions of exchange and transaction as analyzed in MARRIOTT 1976: 109–142. Also, as BOURDIEU (1977, 1989) has suggested, the "size" of the public event and calculating the number of people in attendance should be factors considered when discussing exchange as a display of wealth, but we need not follow his rationale of this to the letter as a "display of symbolic capital."

allowing residents an occasion for religious fulfillment in a congenial and celebratory environment that takes the performance of religious rites out of the temple precincts and into the marketplace. While this dimension of the phenomenon is no less significant (cf. KOROM 1999), I wish to focus on the political and spiritual dimension of the *pūjā* here, for it provides us useful insights into how caste tensions can be defused periodically within a socially sanctioned environment of display.

THE WORSHIP OF DHARMARAJ CONSIDERED SPATIO-TEMPORALLY

In medieval times Dharmaraj *pūjā* was celebrated primarily in the "core area" known as Rarh (*rāṛha*), which served as the historical stage for the events narrated in the *Dharmamangal* literature upon which the deity's worship was founded. Dharma worship flourished along with this epic literature and may have spread into the contiguous areas of Bihar in the west, Assam in the northeast (NEOGI 1951), and as far south as northern Orissa. But due to historical exigencies, the decline in the recitation of the literature, and gradual absorption into other modes of worship (especially Shaivite), Dharmaraj's communities of devotees shrank considerably in size, only maintaining a strong foothold in the Rarh region. Ethnographic evidence from the 1950s, however, suggests that the ritual performance was more widespread (BHATTACHARYYA 1952, 1953) even in the modern period. The most popular *gājans* or *pūjās* are performed presently in Bankura, Burdwan, and Birbhum, with the highest concentration found in the last. They are mostly celebrated during the hot and rainy seasons – from Baishakh (*baiśākh* = April–May) to Shraban (*śrābaṇ* = July–August) – to ensure the advent of the rains and the subsequent rice harvest, although a few minor *pūjās* in honor of Dharmaraj are held during the winter months.

The Dharmaraj *pūjā* carries varying degrees of importance from place to place. In towns such as Beliatore (Bankura District) the ritual is a huge and elaborate affair known throughout Bengal. But in most of the villages celebrating Dharmaraj's presence, the ceremony is small-scale, attracting only people from the immediate environs. It is perhaps unusual that Dharmaraj is the paramount deity in Goalpara, but because he is given the title of *grāmya debatā* (village deity) he is believed to be the guardian of the village, the protector of devotees, and the persecutor of wrongdoers. Everyone in Goalpara unquestioningly states that Dharmaraj is the most important deity in the village, and that his *pūjā* is the largest and most important in the annual festival cycle.[11] There is also no question concerning the efficacy of worshipping Dharmaraj: he must be appeased for the individual and collective well-being of the

[11] One of the criteria used by people in Goalpara to judge the importance and success of an event is its "bigness." The term *baṛa* (big) and phrase *khub baṛa* (very big) are used to signify the size and stature of an event or person. Thus the phrase *baṛa lok* (big person) is used in Bengali to signify a rich or influential man. This idea may be part of a larger "folk aesthetic" in Indo-European notions of performance. On "bigness" as a concept in Europe and America, see GOLDSTEIN 1991.

community, as the personal experience narratives I have discussed elsewhere attest (KOROM 1997c).

Although a certain Brahman living in Goalpara performs a daily *pūjā* at the village temple housing the Dharma *śilā* (stone), the focus of community worship is on the annual celebration. The annual performance of Dharmaraj's worship is considered even greater than the *pūjā* for Durga, which is without doubt the largest and most popular religious celebration in West Bengal. Dharmaraj's centrality is also suggested by statements we find in the origin narratives told in the village to account for the unique timing of the *pūjā* during the month of Chaitra (*caitra* = March–April). I have discussed these narratives at great length elsewhere (e.g., KOROM 1996, 1997c), so I do not wish to dwell on them here. It is necessary, however, to point out two important orienting factors. First, according to the master narrative of the village's oral tradition, Dharmaraj himself appeared in Goalpara and stated that he should be worshipped in the village. In community elder and master storyteller S. P. Chattopadhyay's version of the story, Dharmaraj appears in the guise of a Brahman to a herder boy (*bāgāl*) and proclaims that the *pūjā* should occur on the *pūrṇimā* (full moon) of the month of Chaitra:

nā āmi ekhāne ābirbhāb haba. tumi jene rākha je ei grāme ei jāẏgāẏ āmi thākba.
Well, I will appear here. Keep in mind that I will stay in this spot, in this village.

āmār pūjā karbe ār grāmer bhītare āmār ek aṅgśa prastar khaṇḍa niẏe giẏe
Worship me and take a piece of rock which is a part of me inside the village

grāmer bhītare sthāpanā karbe. sekhāne pūjā habe.
[and] establish it inside the village. There will be *pūjā* there.

pūjāṭā habe caitra pūrṇimāẏ. caitra pūrṇimāẏ ei pūjā habe.
The *pūjā* will be on Chaitra *pūrṇimā*. On Chaitra *pūrṇimā* this very *pūjā* will happen.

Chaitra is the last month of the Bengali year, and the worship service is held, as the narrative states, on *pūrṇimā*, the full moon. In reality, this makes Dharmaraj *pūjā* the last ritual of the year, falling just before the beginning of a new cycle. Residents of Goalpara see it as the first *pūjā* of the new year because it falls at a time of transition, foreshadowing all other village observances to follow during the next cycle. In this sense, the ritual itself is situated in a liminal zone. The Dharmaraj *pūjā* thus suggests both opening and closure. It is simultaneously a time to end the festival cycle and a place to begin. It provides, in Jonathan Z. SMITH's terms, "a place upon which to stand," a punctuated period providing the village's basic religious orientation. As SMITH writes, "There is... the possibility of a real beginning, even of achieving the Beginning, a standpoint from which all things flow, a standpoint from which...[one] may gain clear vision" (1978: 289). Such a period of collective action is also an appropriate time to reflect on social distinctions and caste hierarchy because

everyone in the community is obliged to participate economically and ritually in the event.

A version of the aetiological narrative told to me by S. P. MUKHOPADHYAY, the *pūjārī* (ritual specialist) who performs daily services at Dharmaraj's temple, confirms that the deity appeared in Goalpara prior to manifesting himself in other locales in the district. For this reason, the people of Goalpara view their *pūjā* as the most important one in the area, the origin of origins. As MUKHOPADHYAY states:

> *āmi moṭāmoṭi jeṭā pūrbapuruṣer kāch theke śunechi seṭā hacche ei dharmarāj ṭhākur*
> That which I have roughly heard from the ancestors is that this very Dharmaraj lord
>
> *rājā ballāl sener āmal theke haẏe āsche. ār kī?*
> has come down from the time of King Ballal Sen.[12] And what else?
>
> *kathita āche je ei dharmarāj ṭhākur, māne biśeṣ kare bīrbhūm* ḍiṣṭrik*er pratham sthān.*
> It is said that this very Dharmaraj lord, I mean especially Birbhum District's first place.
>
> *māne āmāder ei goẏālpāṛā theke ābirbhāb haẏeche.*
> I mean from our very Goalpara [he] appeared.

The passage suggests a unique position for Dharmaraj in Goalpara, and succinctly voices indigenous concepts about Dharmaraj's primary role in village worship. In other words, it is said that Dharmaraj should be worshipped first and foremost in Goalpara. From the point of view of the residents, Goalpara is the center of Dharmaraj worship, and his *pūjā* is central to the village's ritual activity. A line from a printed version of Dharmaraj's origin narrative (MITRA 1972: 127) clarifies the point to an even greater extent:

> *e añcale jata dharmapūjā haẏ, sabār āge āmār pūjā cāi.*
> In this region, however many Dharma *pūjā*s there may be, I want mine to be before them all.

[12] Ballal Sen was the second in the line of the Sen kings, who ruled a great portion of Bengal for over 125 years. He was the son of Bijay Sen, who died in 1158CE, leaving his kingdom in the hands of his son. See MAJUMDAR 1943: 216–218. This suggests a very long period of development for the *pūjā*, but it is necessary to approach the historical reference with caution, since Ballal Sen, for reasons unknown to me, has become a sort of folkloric figure and culture hero in Bengali oral and popular tradition, and many features of Bengali culture are often traced back to his reign. It is highly questionable whether any of the *Dharmamangal* literature in its preserved form dates back to the 12th century (cf. SEN 1975: 141), but it is quite possible that the worship of the deity predates any of the texts or their rise in popularity. SEN (1975: 163), however, notes that an obscure early 18th-century text titled *Niranjanmangal* describes a chance encounter between the *Dharmamangal*'s hero Lausen and Ballal Sen. This fact links the mythic, historic, and legendary. On mythological knowledge during Ballal Sen's period of rule, see HAZRA 1985.

Such pivoting of the sacred grounds belief and practice in one distinct location. But unlike many larger and more popular sites of *kratophany* (manifestation of power), as ELIADE has termed them (1958), Goalpara's locus of power does not have a written tradition associated with it, as I have been stressing. Instead, the importance of the place, time, and performance of the Dharmaraj *pūjā* is maintained and perpetuated by a corpus of oral narratives about his first appearance in the village.[13] Let us now move on to a consideration of ritual actions taken by the key actors involved in the *pūjā* to provide more texture for situating my concluding discussion of liminality and *communitas*.

DOWN BY THE RIVER

Bathing and ritual purification play a major role in Hindu rituals, so they must be performed prior to worship. As Lawrence BABB has stated, "the principal actor or actors in ritual must themselves be in a purified condition before approaching the deity" (1975: 47). Purity before the deity is a necessary precondition of worship in virtually all Hindu rituals, and purification must be performed if a rite is to be effective. Running waters are the most powerful means of purification because the river "both absorbs pollution and carries it away" (ECK 1981: 217). To accomplish this task in preparation for the *pūjā*, Subodh Chattopadhyay, a Brahman youth from the village, makes arrangements for a bus to transport village residents to a place on the banks of the Ganges known as Uddharanpur two days before the *pūjā* begins. Uddharanpur is located approximately one hour south of Goalpara by road. The scenic spot is a popular local pilgrimage site because the Ganges broadens there into a gently flowing river.[14]

When the bus arrives in Goalpara at 5 a.m. on the 24th of Chaitra (April 7, 1990), pilgrims of all castes, are waiting to board. The seating arrangement did not necessarily break down into caste groups, but it was clear that clusters of caste-based friends had formed on the bus both to and from the river. The atmosphere was not, strictly speaking, one of sacredness; rather, the trip served the additional purpose of allowing people to take a leisurely break from their daily routines. This was especially true for many of the women on board, who told me that they saw the occasion as an opportunity to gossip with their friends and to get away from their husbands,

[13] These themes are the subject of other studies authored by me. See KOROM 1996, 1997a,b,c, 1999.

[14] The Ganges (*gaṅgā*) rose in prominence some time after the decline of the Indus Valley civilization, and eventually became the archetypal sacred waters. Her name means "going" or "motion," coming from the root *gam* (APTE 1985: 399). Her waters are swift and powerful, for she is *śakti*, female energy in the form of water. Because the Ganges is considered to be a symbol of life and fertility, she incorporates all potentialities in her water. She is the *fons et origo*, the source of all possible existence, for water is without form. From this formlessness springs forth all potentiality. In her all seeds are contained. She is literally the germ of life. Symbolically, she is that void from which all things come, and to which they must return in the end. She gives life in the beginning and accepts death in the end. For more on this line of reasoning, see ELIADE 1958: 188ff. On the mythology of the Ganges, see ECK 1986: 166–183.

while simultaneously accruing *puṇya* (merit) by bathing in the Ganges, the mother of all rivers.

As soon as we arrived, everyone proceeded to the river. The pilgrims then proceeded to the bathing *ghāṭ* (steps) and purchased white sugar candy (*mol*) to offer the river during the bathing rite. As people began purchasing their offerings, they gradually segmented into family and caste units, wandering to different spots along the river to bathe. One by one, the pilgrims began to move down the steps toward the water. Brahmans performed the *gāẏatrī mantra* in praise of the sun, while other castes simply hailed Ganga, the river goddess. After each person finished their bath, they filled pots with water and clay, then washed their clothes in an informal ritual to purify clothing as well as body.[15] While clothes were drying, the Goalpara group moved around the pilgrimage complex, purchasing souvenirs such as religious pictures, chapbooks glorifying the site, and shopped for fried snacks (*bhājā*) and sweets to eat along with the *muṛi* (puffed rice) brought from home.

No one ate until after everyone had finished bathing. A scenic, quiet spot a short distance from the river was discovered by one of the children, and everyone sat in small groups eating large mounds of puffed rice mixed with water, raw chili peppers, fried snacks, and sweets. People were quick to point out that one should not overeat from this point onward because partial abstinence was one obligatory aspect of the observances that must be kept during the *pūjā*, especially for those individuals who would become the devotees (*bhaktyās*) of Dharmaraj. Conversation during the meal was mostly about the forthcoming *pūjā*. A main concern among the women was the amount of housework and cooking they would have to do for guests and relatives. Those to become *bhaktyās* were gathered in their own circle, discussing the activities that would take place during the *pūjā* and why each had taken on the responsibility of becoming a temporary renunciant. The children played after their meal, while the remainder of the men talked about all of the fine liquor that would be consumed on the last day of the *pūjā*. Conversation went on in this manner for approximately two hours, at which time Subodh assembled us for the return journey, and by 1 p.m. we were back in the village. The pilgrims returned to their homes to share *prasād* with family members. Local pilgrimages of this sort are standard practice in north India (cf. GOLD 1988), for whenever a great religious event approaches, it is desirable to bathe in the Ganges, especially for those people who have made a *mānasik* (vow) for the occasion.

What is it, then, that makes water such a powerful symbol? How is it that seemingly dirty water can bring about an ontological change in the pilgrim? Pilgrims simply told me that the bath is performed to clean body and mind prior to the *pūjā*. In order to enter the realm of the sacred one must be pure. Ritual purification offers the pilgrim the opportunity to place himself back into the sacred sphere from whence we came by removing the finite and impure activities of existence. Goalpara

[15] It is interesting to note that women do not escape housework by going on such journeys, but creatively incorporate activities such as washing into the leisure-time activity itself. This phenomenon is fairly widespread in North India. For another example, see KUMAR 1988:83–110, esp. 89.

residents echoed this by acknowledging that the exigencies of daily life make one impure. Therefore, bathing must be a prerequisite to worship. Historians of religions have taken this idea one step further by interpreting the act as a primal event. As Frederick STRENG has noted: "To purify means to return to a powerless form, the original power, which in itself is pure" (1969:92).

The bathing process constitutes a "rite of separation" (VAN GENNEP 1960) from the previous life, a symbolic rebirth into a new and pure condition. It is a total regeneration during which physical form becomes as boundless as the water into which it is immersed. It is a total "reintegration into the formlessness of preexistence," as Mircea ELIADE has stated (1958: 188). By emerging from the water, the pilgrim "becomes a part of the act of creation in which form was first expressed" (ibid.). It is an act which is repeated over and over again during the course of the *pūjā*. One contemplative Brahman pilgrim explained this symbolic interpretation of scholars as an act of parturition, describing the Ganges as *mā* (mother) and bathers as her children being born from her waters.

By partaking in the sacred repetition of bathing, the pilgrim experiences the whole of time. From the moment one emerges from the water until the moment one again performs the act of immersion, the cycle of time is theoretically experienced. This cycle can be interpreted on two levels: On the human level immersion is equivalent to death, and emergence can be seen as a new birth, for the pilgrim comes out of the waters as a child without any sin (*pāp*). On the cosmic level the immersion could be interpreted as symbolic of *pralaý* (cf. ZIMMER 1974: 3–22), the cataclysmic flood which periodically dissolves existence as we know it into the all-engulfing primeval ocean of milk, the *kṣirsāgar* (milk ocean). The world is once again created anew after this cataclysm, continuing the endless cyclical pattern of time. Although a phenomenological interpretation such as the one presented above might lend meaning to our symbolic understanding of the event as an essential representation of the cyclical and transient nature of Hindu time reckoning, residents would not see it this way. For them, the separation is only temporary and has no conscious cosmogonic significance. However, one village resident did confirm that the bath washed away sin, while another curious bystander who overheard our conversation chimed in, saying that the bath allows one to go home anew (*natun kare*).

Those who are able to attend the annual outing think of themselves as having achieved something special. They say that they feel *pabitra* (sacred), and are ready to begin their participation as audience and performer in the annual rites. But while I have discussed briefly the process of bathing as an entry into the pure realm of sacred activity, I do not want to overemphasize the sacred dimension over the profane; nor do I wish to separate the two realms completely, for as we have seen, the journey also entails a dimension of leisure, a free-time activity. Pilgrims clearly see these two forms of activity as inseparable. This is true of the whole *pūjā* phenomenon as well, as I have attempted to suggest elsewhere (KOROM 1999).

I have hinted above that the bathing rites are structurally similar to rites of passage in the sense defined by Arnold VAN GENNEP (1960) and elaborated by Victor TURNER (1973, 1974, 1977, 1979). While the entire *pūjā* event could be inter-

preted as a periodical rite of passage for the whole community, the *bhaktyās*, to whom I turn below, go through a more specific transformation of status because of their special role in the rituals.

BECOMING A DEVOTEE

The *bhaktyās* (or *bhaktas* = devotees) are a special class of people who, for numerous reasons, such as vows (*mānasik*), money, comradery, happiness (*ānanda*), or the general well-being of family and community, volunteer to perform austerities during the three days of rituals. The greatest number of devotees by far come from the lower castes of the village. Although the total of twenty-seven *bhaktyās* are dominated by Lohars, they come from four castes in Goalpara, including two Brahmans, three Haris, and two Doms, the latter belonging to the untouchable class. The *bhaktyās* perform their austerities not for specific reasons, but for the well-being of their family. This reason is given by devotees who perform such austerities in other villages as well. My information closely corresponds to the statement made by R. M. SARKAR concerning devotees from other places in Birbhum. He writes that while many *bhaktyās* have specific vows in mind when they become devotees "all are centered round the general well-being of the person or of the families" (1985: 266).

As suggested elsewhere (KOROM 1997b), the *pūjā* is becoming increasingly dominated by Lohars as Doms, who originally claimed proprietary rights over the *pūjā*, decrease in population in the village. It is very common to hear Lohars refusing to accept the claim of the Doms, stating that Dharmaraj has always been their caste deity. On one level, everyone says that Dharmaraj is the village deity (*grāmya debatā*), but on a more subtle level Lohars tend to construct their own caste identity around him. Such caste competition, however, does not impinge attempts to abolish caste hierarchy among the devotees during the ritual period. As I demonstrate below, however, this is an imagined equality more akin to a Weberian ideal type. In reality, distinctions are made, not only during social interaction but also in the context of the rituals performed. Egalitarianism is an ideal, but cooperation is the reality for which *pūjā* participants strive. The *bhaktyās*' entry into special ritual status begins with the bathing journey, but this is a phenomenon in which anyone can take part, so another rite takes place after returning from the river to mark the beginning phase of their social transformation.

After returning to Goalpara, the *bhaktyās* go to the youth club in Pashcimpara, where they are met by the village barber (*nāpit*). He performs *bhakta kāmāna* (devotee shaving) by giving each of the devotees a haircut, trimming their mustaches, and shaving their armpits. The act of tonsure parallels the Brahmanical *upanayana* (sacred thread investiture) ceremony which marks a Brahman's entry into twice-born status (ROBINSON 1980: 188). Similarly, the *kāmāna* ceremony begins the process of ritual transformation experienced by the *bhaktyās*. This act is seen as paradigmatic of being a *bhaktyā*, since all of their subsequent performances during the *pūjā* are described as *kāmāna*. Shaving body hairs is therefore understood to be

an act of personal sacrifice, like all other forms of austerity (*tapas*) to be practiced during the event. For his labors, the barber receives the shank of a sacrificed goat on the last evening of the *pūjā*. However, the barber did not shave everyone present. While he was shaving devotees of the Lohar caste, the Haris shaved each other. The two devotees of the untouchable Dom caste did not even show up, since they shaved themselves at home. This was true of the Brahman *bhaktyās* as well, who performed the rite in their own courtyards. Thus, both "highest" and "lowest" castes were forced by traditions of relative purity and pollution to do it for themselves. It is interesting to note that during my first conversation with veteran *bhaktyā* Mukti Hajra, he explained to me that everyone is equal (*sabāi samān*) during the *pūjā*.

Recorded statements like Mukti's pronouncement, have led some anthropologists to use TURNER's paradigm of *communitas* without verifying the accounts. Although subalterns (mostly low caste) like Mukti assert *communitas* even while continuing to observe difference, there is a distinct sense that the ideal can never be actualized, as I would like to suggest in my conclusion. The low-caste yearning for equality is quite different from Brahmanical interpretations, which tend to reinforce notions of hegemonic power over other members of the village. What results is an emic ambiguity concerning exactly what sort of transformation occurs during the performance of rituals. Brahmans and other high castes maintain that Lohars and Doms never achieve a status change, while low-caste devotees insist that they do indeed elevate their position, albeit temporarily. This sort of reasoning should suggest a need to use TURNER's musings with selective caution. While his notion does retain a measure of analytical value and might be useful in some contexts, it does not have the universal applicability he originally intended. However, the rites of passage model is a useful one for understanding the temporary transformation undergone by devotees prior to and during the rituals. I shall return to this notion in the concluding section, but for the moment, let us return to the devotees.

While the shaving ritual is in progress, the *bhaktyās* sit on the ground joking, smoking, and talking about all of the events to take place over the next few days. Much conversation focused on the large quantities of alcohol that would be consumed on the last day of the *pūjā*. The consumption of alcohol is not seen as a profane act, since it is said that Dharmaraj himself is very fond of drinking. Antinomian religious behavior such as intoxication is justified by linking the act of consuming alcohol with an activity in which the deity also engages. By identifying the deity with such human vices, as one resident put it, humanizes Dharmaraj, making him more accessible and comprehensible to the average worshipper. Drinking thus becomes a sacred activity that combines service (*sebā*) for the deity with the pleasure of intoxication (*neśā*). As chief drummer Sushil Das remarked one evening when he was playing the special *pūjā* rhythms on his *ḍhāk* for me:

> *megh garjan śeṣ haẏe geche tār pare e bāre āpnār bājīrā khāoẏā-deoẏā..*
> *Megh garjan* has finished. After that, this time, your musicians eat...

khāoẏā-ḍeoẏā balte...mad [hāsya]! bābā mad khete khub bhālabāse.
to say eat...liquor [laughter]! *Bābā* loves to drink liquor.

āmār svajāti anek okhāne jān. kintu...alpa alpa mad khāẏ.
Many of my caste brethren go there. But...they drink quite a bit of liquor.

tāte neśā kintu pachanda haẏe jāẏ.
So there is pleasure in that intoxication.

ebaṅg āmār svajāti khubi ānanda lābh kare matan ei mad-ṭad khāoẏār par.
And it is like my caste brethren attain very much happiness after drinking this liquor.

e bār bhā̃ṛāl laṛā. e bār āpnār bhā̃ṛāl laṛā haẏe gela. e bār bhaktyārā ānanda karche.
Now *bhā̃ṛāl laṛā*. Now your *bhā̃ṛāl laṛā* has happened. Now the *bhaktyā*s make merry.

bājĩrāo ānanda karche. e bār oi āge du din je nāchanā bājanā bejeche,
The musicians also make merry. Now those last two days that dance music has been played,

sei bājanā bājiẏe bhaktyārā ānanda karla bājĩrāo ānanda karla.
after playing that very music the *bhaktyā*s made merry, the musicians also made merry.

e bār ānanda karte karte grām beriẏe haẏe jāẏ.
Now, while making merry they go around the village.

Drinking serves an important function during the *pūjā* as a mechanism for attaining happiness (*ānanda*). As Sushil suggests, villagers justify drinking by stating that *bābā* (i.e., Dharmaraj) himself loves alcohol. The logic here is that if it is good enough for the deity, it must be good enough for mortals. Drinking makes Dharmaraj happy, and if he is happy, so too is everyone else. The practice is not random, however, for *bhaktyā*s must maintain a strict diet through partial fasting (*upabās*) once they have been shaved.

After the shaving is completed, the *bhaktyā*s bathe once again in one of the many village ponds and return to their own homes to partake in their last full meal before the *pūjā*. This last big meal, called *bhārer bhāt* (filling rice), simple as it is, is a time for contemplating the seriousness of the forthcoming events, while simultaneously anticipating the joviality and transgressive behavior of the ritual's final day. The meal is another indicator of the *bhaktyā*s' transition to a new status, for because they eat only boiled food without raw chilies, they see it as a common form of personal sacrifice. Later in the evening, after the meal, the *bhaktyā*s gather together and "talk" (*kathā balā*). The talk is informal and takes many forms. Ajit Lohar, the *kol*

deẏāsī (head devotee) reviews the sequence of events for the next three days with his fellow *bhaktyās*. This is a sort of male bonding ritual that consolidates their special relationship as people set off from other participants. It also adds to an idealized sense of *communitas* imagined by the devotees during the event.[16] On the next evening, the *pūjā* will begin at the Dharmaraj temple, when they receive their *uttarīẏa*, symbolic of the *paitya* (sacred thread) worn by Brahmans.

INTENSE WORSHIP AND FESTIVITY

The first day of the *pūjā* occurs two days before the full moon (25th of Chaitra, 1396 [April 8, 1990]). In the morning, everyone in Goalpara is busy making last minute preparations for the forthcoming events. The *bhaktyās* have already begun their partial fast and taken their first sacred bath of the day. As preparations are commencing in Goalpara, the *ḍhākīs* in Shiyan are tuning their drums. Back home in Goalpara, people can be seen cleaning their houses, washing down the dirt paths in front of their homes for the purpose of purifying the route Dharmaraj will take when he is led in procession through and around the village. Children are playing throughout the area, especially near the Dharmaraj temple. In their play, they take on the roles performed by ritual specialists and musicians, and it is fairly common to see children pretending to beat imaginary *ḍhāks* and *ḍhols*, or acting out the various rituals performed by the devotees.[17] Essentially, this day is still one of normal activity, for everyone is completing their work schedules to allow for ample free time during the *pūjā*.

By sunset all of the preparations are complete, and people begin congregating at the temple. With the exception of the Brahman *bhaktyās*, who already wear their own sacred threads (*paitya*), the remaining low-caste devotees sit to the sides of the temple winding together the seven strands of white cotton thread to serve as their *uttarīẏas* after their consecration. The eventual donning of the *uttarīẏa* marks the second major event that signals the advent of changed status, but it also denotes an expression of subordination on the part of the devotee in the powerful presence of Dharmaraj. This practice is most likely related to the subjugation of a prisoner, as in the proverb (DE 1392 B.S.: 65):

galāẏ gāmchā diẏe ṭene ānā
Placing a cloth around [one's] neck [in order to] drag

[16] The devotees' status is even more demarcated on the next evening when they say that they enter into *dharma gotra* (Dharma's lineage) as a result of receiving the *uttarīẏa*, as discussed below. On changing from one's normal lineage to raise status during the *pūjā* elsewhere in West Bengal, see also SARKAR 1986: 252; 297–298, footnote 7.

[17] Acting as *bhaktyās* is a kind of informal training for future devotees, for I often overheard *bhaktyās* saying that they too learned about the ritual activities during their childhood play. Indeed, the rituals are indigenously labeled as *khelā* (play). See KOROM 1999.

While they wind their threads, they wait for a new figure, the *mūl ḍeẏāśī* to arrive from the nearby village of Taltor.[18] When he arrives, he sits with the *bhaktyā*s, locating himself closest to the door of the temple. By nine at night, Shibu *dā*, the visiting Brahman ritual specialist who officiates the occasion, has arrived from his own village. The one large and two small *bāṇeśvar*s, symbols of Dharmaraj's fecundity and power, have already been placed in full view on the veranda earlier in the day. Shibu *dā* is sitting cross-legged to the left of the objects as he signals his willingness to begin. The stage is now set for the transformation of the *bhaktyā*s. The threads, now completely woven, are put into the custody of the priest by Ajit Lohar, the *kol deẏāśī* mentioned earlier. A few more drummers are present, but the majority of *ḍhāklī*s from Shiyan will not arrive until the next morning.

The drummers pick up the pace of playing the *pūjā*'s opening beat to let everyone in the vicinity know that the event is about to begin. This is the first of many special rhythms or *lau*s (waves) played at different times during the next three days. Most people do not know the rhythms by their special names, since they are referred to loosely even by the drummers. But everyone knows the significance of each beat, and will recognize that the specific ritual performance associated with each rhythm is about to begin. As the opening rhythm sounds, Bipad Mandal, the organizing committee's secretary, ceremonially brings out a "folk-book"[19] wrapped in an auspicious red cloth and hands it to Shibu *dā*, who will read out the *dharma bandanā* (Dharma invocation) to the devotees. A heightened pace of drumming signals to everyone in the area that the *pūjā* has started. When the audience is completely silent, Shibu *dā* begins reciting the text's couplets in a lilting, chant-like fashion. After the completion of each couplet, the *bhaktyā*s, who are now standing and holding their threads (*uttarīẏa dharaṇ*) with folded hands in front of the seated chanter, repeat the lines while gently swaying from side to side in a manner said to represent the movements of Dharmaraj's horse.[20] When they have completed each repetition, the drummers begin to play very loudly as the *bhaktyā*s lead the audience members in *nām ḍāk*, the name call for Dharmaraj. The call is a drone-like shout in the form of

[18] The term *mūl* means "root," and it is generally accepted that *deẏāśī* comes from *deb* (deity) + *aṅgśa* (portion). For a discussion of the latter's etymology, see BHATTACHARYYA 1975: 627–628. This title is given to the main *bhaktyā* who performs many of the key rituals on behalf of the entire group. In Goalpara, the position of *mūl deẏāśī* is hereditary, and was held in the early 1990s by Sudho Krishna Ghosh, an octogenarian member of the Sadgop (milkman) caste. Hierarchically, he is given more spiritual power than the *kol deẏāśī*, who, is nonetheless functionally significant in his role as foreman of the devotees.

[19] On the characteristics, classification, and cultural importance of folk-books, see YASSIF 1987: 20–27. The book is actually an inexpensive primary school notebook containing some hand-written texts used at various times during the ritual. The text was written out in 1956 by the late Gaurishankar Mukhopadhyay, grandfather of Harishankar, currently the village's daily *pūjārī*. No one knows whether he wrote the text from memory or copied it from a book. The text does include some scribal errors, but it would be difficult to presume that this is due to a faulty memory or an inaccurate text. This is the only copy, and is securely kept in the secretary's chest along with the *pūjā* ledgers.

[20] As village resident Shashthi Sutradhar stated to me, "Dharmaraj rides on a horse." This is a common belief in Birbhum District, where it is understood that Dharmaraj will often mount a white horse in the dead of night and ride through wooded areas and fields. See KOROM 1997b: 166–167.

an exclamatory interjection similar to the English "oh." It rises in volume until the local name of Dharmaraj (Baharadihi) is vocalized, during which it slowly decreases until completed with the final expletive *go* (e.g. *oooooh bābā baharāḍihi dharmarāj goooooo*). As ROBINSON has pointed out, the *nām ḍāk* punctuates the *pūjā* "in such a way as to articulate transitions from phase to phase" (1980: 114). In this sense, the name call is a framing device, demarcating smaller sets of ritual acts within the overall *pūjā* event. The name call is also significant as a communal performance because it is the only real ritual action in which audience members fully participate as performers. One must recall here that the level of noise generated is one indicator of a successful *pūjā*. Therefore, every voice is considered to be essential in arousing Dharmaraj. The call is repeated after every couplet to coerce him into the assembly.[21] Through this verbal act, the deity not only "comes," but "becomes" to the response of the calls (ROBINSON 1980: 71).

When the *bandanā* is completed there is a great deal of drumming and general noise-making to arouse Dharmaraj's interest, cajoling him to join the assembly for the duration of the *pūjā*. Drumming continues for approximately twenty minutes, while the *kol deẏāśī* orders the *bhaktyās* to prostrate themselves in front of the temple. Once all of the devotees are on the ground, a lit incense burner is passed over their bodies several times by the *kol deẏāśī* to the accompaniment of *nām ḍāk*. This is done to purify the devotees before they proceed through the village and rice paddies to the *muktadhar pukur* (pond of liberation). Elsewhere in Bengal this act is interpreted as a suicide threat (*hatyā*) to reinsure Dharmaraj's active participation (ROBINSON 1980: 154–155). The act is reminiscent of Ranjabati's (the textual hero Lausen's mother) impalement and Lausen's self-dismemberment in the *Dharmamangal* literary tradition to secure boons from the deity. In Goalpara, however, the *kol deẏāśī* describes it simply as an act of obeisance. It is approximately 8 p.m. by now, and the crowd has grown considerably. Most audience members do not follow the procession to the pond; instead, they linger at the temple or return home for their dinner, while the devotees proceed to the pond.

The *bhaktyās* must complete their metamorphosis to a higher status before they can perform the feats of austerity (*tapas*) during the remainder of the *pūjā*. To complete their change they must perform a procession through the village to the *muktadhar pukur*, transporting the large *bāṇeśvar* and an earthen pot called *pūrkalśī* (full pot) along with them. The objects are placed on the heads of two *bhaktyās* to the accompaniment of a new drumbeat played solely for this purpose. As the procession begins winding its way westward along the main path of the village, another rhythm, distinctively called *cālān* (moving), is played. During the procession incense burners, which are waved in the faces of the swaying bearers of the *bāṇeśvar* and pot, are be-

[21] On the notion of coercing the deity, see ROBINSON 1980: 110. See also MITRA 1972: 95, 170 and DAS 1983: 682. There is also textual evidence for another reason this practice is performed in Ghanaram's version of the *Dharmamangal*. See CAKRABARTTĪ 1962:

> *mariẏā nā mare tuẏā nām jape je*
> He who chants your name, does not die [even] in death.

ing carried by other devotees. The procession occasionally halts for a few minutes so that people in the houses along the main path may come out and receive the *darśan* (auspicious sight) of the parade. The rhythm played during these halts is called *nācanā bājnā* (dance beat). The halts are said to bring luck and well-being to the individual who does the seeing. At these arresting moments the ritual objects are given to other bearers, so that each *bhaktyā* has the opportunity to carry one of the items before reaching the pond. After each halt, the drummers revert to the *cālān* beat and continue to move along the road, eventually proceeding into the open paddy fields. Drumming continues as the pace of movement quickens. Finally, the group arrives at the pond, where the drumming abruptly ceases when the devotees form a circle around Shibu *dā* on the eastern banks of the pond.

Once everyone is silent and seated, candles are lit and the *ghāṭ bandanā* (bathing step invocation) is recited. The text is once again read line by line from the folk-book by the officiating priest. Each section is repeated three times by the *kol deẏāsī*, after which *nām ḍāk* is performed by all present. Then the *bāṇeśvar* is bathed in the pond by the *mūl deẏāsī* to the accompaniment of a nameless rhythm played only during bathing rituals. At the same time, the pot is filled with pond water – now considered the holy bath water of the *bāṇeśvar* – and some flowers. ROBINSON (1980: 89) interprets the *pūrkalsī* and *bāṇeśvar* as female and male sexual symbols respectively, their conjunction resulting in a union to confer fecundity on barren women. The addition of the flowers to the pot is, in her estimation, an act of impregnation (ibid.: 90). Her perspective is adumbrated in the second and third verse of the *ghāṭ bandanā* with the mention of an unidentified water maiden and the sanctification of the water, which subsequently becomes the "waters of life" (ibid.: 91). The interpretation is viable insofar as fertility is seen as one of the goals of the *pūjā*. However, as conceived in Goalpara, fertility is only one form of *maṅgal* (auspiciousness) conferred during the *pūjā*.

The *pūjā* cannot, therefore, be reduced to one common goal because the reasons given by devotees for performing *sebā* (service) imply that there is another more general and overriding communal concern for blessings (*āśirbād*) and happiness (*ānanda*). My data is also corroborated by SARKAR's (1985: 253–263) information from another cluster of villages in Birbhum, where the frequency of fertility mentioned as a motivation for performing *sebā* is quite low. Nevertheless, curing barrenness must certainly be seen as one aspect of the *pūjā*'s efficacy.

More drummers have arrived from Shiyan by now, including Ratan Das, the new leader of the *ḍhākī*s. They join the others as the devotees gather around Shibu *dā*, the bathed *bāṇeśvar*, and the *pūrkalsī*. The *uttarīyas* are also placed around the spikes of the *bāṇeśvar*, while a banana and green mango are impaled on the plank's metal spikes.

A betal leaf coated with *sindur* (vermilion paste) and white sweetmeats to be distributed as *prasād* (food offerings) are also placed on the plank. Shibu *dā* then smears *sindur* taken from the *bāṇeśvar* on the foreheads of all the *bhaktyā*s. At this point, he begins to recite from memory verses in hybrid Sanskrit from the *Dharmapuja Bidhan*, a liturgical manual consulted for correct procedure (BANDO-

PĀDHYĀY 1323B.S.: 29).[22] After reciting a brief passage in homage to Dharmaraj, he distributes the *uttañyas* to the low-caste *bhaktyās*. Interpretations differ, but most people are of the opinion that the *bhaktyās* enter into the deity's *gotra* (lineage) at this point, taking on the temporary status of Brahmans. ROBINSON's data from Baruipur, West Bengal reconfirms this point of view, since her field consultants are of the opinion that the devotees and the *bāṇeśvar* become "affiliated in the mingling of the waters" (1980: 85), thereby causing the change in lineage. The water of the *pūrkalśī* therefore represents this mingled water which passes from the ritual items to the ritual actors in due process. As a result, all become Dharmaraj's agents.[23] After this, the *guru mantra*, the 101 names of gods, is recited as the full pot is passed around to each devotee as an act of communal solidarity. The recitation is accompanied by *puṣpāñjali* (flower throwing) for the *bāṇeśvar*, and the consecrated flowers are then placed in the pot. After the consecration, the water in the pot is considered to be *pabitra* (holy). Thereafter it is referred to as *śānti jal* (peace water). It is said to undergo a transubstantiation during the preceding ritual because it becomes a metonymic replacement (cf. TAMBIAH 1968) for Ganges water. The *śānti jal* is then used in all of the *pūjā* rituals for general anointing.

The rituals of the first day seem to suggest that the *bhaktyās* acquire an elevated status far superior to their everyday caste positions in the local hierarchy. Although I cannot go into specific detail here (but cf. KOROM 1999) to describe all of the ritual activities performed after the above initiatory events, there is one ritual performance in particular that is pertinent to my concluding discussion of ritual status and caste politics. The performance, known as *mukta snān* (bath of liberation), occurs on the evening of the second day. The *mukta snān* ritual begins at approximately 10 p.m., after hours of secular performances by brass bands in the vicinity of the temple precincts. How the ritual begins is relevant to my earlier statements concerning the hypothetical equality of all *bhaktyās* during the *pūjā* and Victor TURNER's related notions of liminality and *communitas*.

When the time comes to bring the deity out of the temple, the *kol deẏāśī* organizes all of the low-caste *bhaktyās* in a straight line leading from the door of the temple to the end of the courtyard. Then he orders the *bhaktyās* to kneel down with their heads touching the ground, so that a human bridge is created. When this is done, Shanti Bhattacarjya, one of the Brahman *bhaktyās*, walks barefoot over the backs of

[22] The text is in Bengali script, and is, according to my research associate, Abhijit Ghosh, "very bad Sanskrit." Shibu *dā* himself does not know the meaning of what he is reciting, but says that he learned it from a copy of the text housed in the university library at Shantiniketan. He insists that the appropriate passages must be recited, but need not be understood. His option of giving priority to the utterance over the meaning of the text lends credence to STAAL's (1979) argument concerning the "meaninglessness of ritual." The *Dharmamangal* of Ghanaram also mentions the liturgical use of this text. See CAKRABARTTĪ 1962: 90.

[23] A minority of others believe that the transformation of status occurs during the reciting of the Dharma *bandanā*. It is interesting to point out here that the Brahman *bhaktyās* insist the lower caste devotees do not *become* Brahmans through this process, but only *like* Brahmans. Their opinion recapitulates hierarchy, rather than abolishing it or relieving it. Another more visible method of demonstrating Brahmanical dominance occurs the following night, and will be discussed in greater detail below.

the other devotees into the temple to the sound of drumming. There are two indigenous interpretations of this act. When asked later, Shanti said that it must be done to show that Brahmans are superior to other castes. But the other devotees all claimed that this must be done because the Brahman's feet cannot touch the ground when he is entering the temple to bring *bābā* (father) out. Thus, from the Brahmanical point of view, the ceremony reinforces caste hierarchy, whereas low-caste people see it as a sacred act, and still claim that equality reigns during the *pūjā*. While TURNER's point of view concerning the "betwixt and between" status of the people going through a rite of passage is well-taken, it is clear from this act that *communitas* is present in only a qualified sense, as suggested in the last section. Rites such as these do not eliminate caste restrictions, but simply alleviate some of the tension generated by social rules, allowing low-caste members of the community a more open forum for negotiations concerning rank and village affairs that may (or may not) be implemented when the village returns to mundane time. Because Brahmans never view the devotees as equal to themselves during the *pūjā*, we must understand the notion of *communitas* as a potential ideal that is never fully actualized and subject to multiple interpretations dependent upon the various social positions of the actors involved. However, this observation raises the question of what, if any, usefulness the concept has in the study of caste-based society in India. In the final section, I should like to review the theories of TURNER and Arnold VAN GENNEP, his original source of inspiration, to draw some conclusions on the data presented in this essay.

ASPECTS OF LIMINALITY

In this concluding section I wish to explore two prominent theories used in the anthropological study of rituals that have been found to be useful for understanding the ways in which an individual undergoes status change during special periods of time. The first is that hypothesized by the folklorist Arnold VAN GENNEP in his 1909 book *Rites of Passage*, and the second, being liminality, a more recent theory constructed by the anthropologist Victor TURNER.[24] TURNER was obviously influenced by VAN GENNEP's book, but built upon it by adding new ideas to the *rites de passage* paradigm. Both VAN GENNEP and TURNER attempt to make their theories universally applicable. As many critics have pointed out (e.g., BYNUM 1984; SALLNOW 1981), their conclusions may be somewhat broad and difficult to substantiate as universals, but their ideas do coincide with my data concerning the devotees of Dharmaraj in Goalpara to a certain extent. I do not intend to draw universal conclusions here, but rather attempt to show how the particular series of rites described above fits into the paradigm.

[24] I am aware of LINCOLN's (1991) critique of VAN GENNEP's spatial model of ritualized social passage based on his analysis of women's initiation rites in which he suggests enclosure-metamorphosis-emergence as an alternative to separation-liminality-reincorporation. LINCOLN's alternative may apply to his own gender-specific data, but for the purposes of my discussion here, I focus solely on VAN GENNEP's work as a precursor to Turner's concerns discussed immediately thereafter.

VAN GENNEP starts off with the basic premise that life consists of a series of passages or transitions. Life, according to him, is a "succession of stages with similar ends and beginnings" (1960: 3). Each of these transitions is marked by "ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another" (ibid.). He then goes on to subdivide each of these passages into three distinct phases. The first phase involves rites of separation (preliminal rites) in which the individual or group is ceremonially set apart from the rest of society. Phase two consists of rites of transition (liminal rites). This is the middle phase of the process during which the participant, having been removed from his or her everyday surroundings, becomes part of a smaller group for the duration of the transition. It is a new and awesome experience for the initiate in this paradoxical position. First of all, he has been removed from the larger body of society and becomes a part of a smaller one, itself set off from society. It is during this phase that many of the changes affecting the liminars occur. Finally, after the completion of the rituals, the third phase, known as rites of reincorporation (post-liminal rites), are put into play. The rite of reincorporation is the period when the liminal group is taken back into society to be part of the integrated whole once again (VAN GENNEP 1960: 11). This, then, is the threefold model proposed by VAN GENNEP at the turn of the century. I should point out here that rites of passage are usually construed as permanent changes, such as Hindu life cycle rites (*saṃskāras*). However, the transformation undertaken by devotees during the Dharmaraj *pūjā* is a temporary and recurrent one, lasting only as long as the annual *pūjā* itself, which in the Hindu idiom would be classified as a *nitya* (recurrent) ritual. It is important to keep this distinction in mind when attempting to understand the passage of the *bhaktyās* from this point of view, for a basic distinction is made between permanent changes and temporary ones in the Hindu context. However, a "rite of passage," as explicated by VAN GENNEP, can refer to any spatial or temporal process, whether permanent or recurrent, during which a change of status, behavior or character takes place.

TURNER took up where VAN GENNEP left off, but focused most of his writing on the liminal phase of the temporal or spatial passage. He further added the notion of symbolic death at the beginning of the rites, followed by rebirth during the final phase when the initiate is reincorporated into the larger body of society (TURNER 1974: 273). Liminality is a transient phase. It is a state in which the liminar is, as TURNER says, "betwixt and between all fixed points of classification" (1974: 232). It is an ambiguous state in the sense that its attributes are not like those of the past or the future. In liminality, the ritual initiate is passing through a symbolic domain in which many of the rules and regulations of his previous existence no longer apply, for he is in a strangely familiar, yet new world. This new world is a kind of "eternal now." The initiate is in transit between two cognitive realms. In the case of the Dharmaraj *pūjā*, the *bhaktyās* are intermediaries between the community and the deity, so their centrality as ritual conduits of the deity's power places them in this paradoxical position of marginal centrality.

I have mentioned earlier that the Dharmaraj *pūjā* occurs during the month of Chaitra, a time when other auspicious rituals such as marriage are not performed in

Goalpara. Although this is generally true in other Bengali communities where Dharmaraj *pūjā* is not scheduled during the month of Chaitra, it is said that the curtailment of many other rituals during this special time makes the efficacy of the *pūjā* for Dharmaraj all the more potent. Certainly there is some concept of time during liminality, for, as we noticed, the punctual timing of ritual events is one of the major duties of the *kol deẏāsī*. But there is a distinct sense of the abatement of profane time in which "the structural view of time is not applicable" (TURNER 1974: 238) because the normal duties of life are postponed for the *bhaktyās* during the days of the *pūjā* event. The ritual specialists participate in a sort of eternal present, a mythical time during which an archetypal action of the god or ancestor is being repeated in the course of performing rites and significant actions (ELIADE 1958: 390ff). In the case of the Dharmaraj *pūjā*, such significant actions are based on the village's master narrative mentioned earlier and, as I have suggested elsewhere (KOROM 2000), implicitly replicate some of the events that occur in the *Dharmamangal* literature. This paradoxical time which is no time becomes a threshold which makes a direct experience with the sacred more accessible. The experience may be in the form of possession, an externally visible phenomenon which is rare in the Goalpara context, or an inward, intuitive one of which only the person undergoing the experience is acutely aware.

In liminality a clearer sense of understanding mankind's relationship to the cosmos is possible, for the initiate learns of his own culture through the narratives, symbols, and rituals involved in the *pūjā*. The meaning of life is experienced directly by the *bhaktyās* through the symbols visualized and the actions performed during the event. Sometimes this knowledge is transmitted to younger *bhaktyās* by their senior counterparts through discourses orated during the early morning baths of purification each day during the *pūjā*. New knowledge, unlike that learned during the preliminal phase, is gained through narrative acts. It is a deeper knowledge, a direct experiential awareness embodied by the individual, a point often made by new *bhaktyās* performing the austerities for the first time. For veteran devotees, the process is one of progressive insight as well as a renewed altered state. Newly acquired knowledge leads to the acquisition of power. It is a spiritual power available only to those who partake in the austere practices that must be performed during the *pūjā*.

The new power is then applied by the *bhaktyā* after his reincorporation into his society at the end of the rites. However, in the case of Goalpara, the acquisition and use of power gained during the rituals is very subtle. In one sense, the older ideals of the society are preserved by the symbols, for they are a storehouse of that which can be conceptualized and known. Through the rituals performed and the stories heard in liminality, one becomes more aware of one's own traditions. In his ritualized alienation, the *bhaktyā* is able to see things more clearly, for he becomes increasingly sensitive to the cultural issues he may take for granted during his day-to-day life. In this way, the traditional values of Hindu society in its localized context are preserved and passed on. As A. K. RAMANUJAN has stated: "Alienation from the immediate environment can mean continuity with an older ideal" (1973: 38). There is another

slight paradox in this statement in the sense that the liminal phase offers a radical new knowing, but adheres to an older traditional ideal. Thus it seems that the *pūjā* is, in part, a maintaining force in Goalpara society in that it preserves through replication the prescriptions given by the deity in the village's master narrative. At the same time, however, it can also reinforce social rules and the strictures of caste hierarchy.

Even those rules which are carried over into the liminal phase from the earlier one are relaxed by not being overemphasized during ritual practices performed while being a liminar. The best example of this is caste interaction during the *pūjā*. As we have seen, caste restrictions are not completely abolished during the bathing and shaving rituals, but notions of purity and pollution are certainly attenuated in many ways. The structural divisions of caste cannot be eliminated totally, but they can be confronted in various creative ways during the period of license provided to the devotees during their liminal period. The ideals of the *pūjā* support an anti-hierarchical stance on the ideological level, at least from the low-caste perspective. Yet they do not do away with them completely, for the problem of social stratification cannot be eliminated altogether through ritual practice. After all, the liminal phase will eventually end, and afterward everyone will once again have to work from within their own respective caste identities to negotiate the existential reality of status on an ongoing and daily basis. Thus, caste distinctions are not abolished, but rather negotiated by stressing cooperation, even though the Brahmanical interpretation reifies hierarchy within the context of the *mukta snān* performance. During the liminal phase of the rituals, a stronger sense of community consciousness emerges. It is what TURNER calls *communitas*. *Communitas* stresses reciprocity and comradeship during this phase. And through this mutual help, a stronger sense of ritual equality based on a recognition of identity differentiation emerges. The Goalpara scenario suggests that counter-status is subtly shaded and highly nuanced even during ritual functions, for it is understood in varying degrees by participants. In other words, perception of status change depends on the original status of the interpreter or actor.

The visual emblems displayed by the *bhaktyās* during the rituals are also relatively the same, regardless of rank or status. With the exception of the *paitya*, the sacred thread worn by Brahman *bhaktyās*, every devotee wears the same clothes and abstains from the same foods, thereby forging common experiences. As the *bhaktyās* perform the shaving rites and pass into the liminal phase on the first evening of the *pūjā*, they theoretically surrender all their possessions. Differences in property and wealth mark the status of the individual, which in turn makes *communitas* a difficult principle to which one must adhere. But during the rituals, all material possessions are left behind in the home. This symbolic act implies the *bhaktyās*' willingness to become part of a cooperative whole. By removing possessions, enhanced opportunity for *communitas* is nurtured.

During the rituals performed as part of the *pūjā* egalitarianism is also present to a certain degree. The performance of rites for Dharmaraj's various manifestations amounts to potential symbolic reduction because there is a tendency of movement

from diversity to unity. This movement is quite considerable if one takes into account the fact that low castes and Dalits (untouchables) are also included within the scope of this reduction. Quoting BABB again: "Worldly hierarchy is therefore momentarily eclipsed – reduced to relative insignificance by the overwhelming inclusiveness of the hierarchical opposition between the mundane and the divine" (1975: 60). In this way, the group of *bhaktyās* can achieve a sense of unity. But because the sacred/profane realms of life contain blurred boundaries in Goalpara, the dichotomy is not always as clear-cut as BABB suggests. Quite often the potential for unity is not actualized due to divisive factors that emerge during the event. For example, drunken brawls on the last day of the *pūjā* have been known to occur among devotees, leading to factionalism within the ritual group.

The annual initiation of the *bhaktyās* is clearly a rite of passage. Their bathing and shaving rituals on the day before the *pūjā* begins mark their separation from the society of which they are a part, even though they are never isolated physically from their community in the sense of a pilgrim. The movement leads them into a liminal phase on the first evening of the *pūjā* when they receive their *uttañyās*. This is the second stage of their passage, and they remain in this position until the conclusion of the rites three days later, when they unceremoniously toss their threads in the *muktadhar pukur* to signal both the end of the annual *pūjā* and their return to normalcy. Upon throwing their *uttañyās* into the pond on the day after the *pūjā* is over, they become reincorporated into the larger whole.

There is also another level on which this passage can be interpreted. Rather than to see it as one passage, the *pūjā* can be seen as a successive series of transitional movements, ultimately ending up with a final reincorporation. Each day in and of itself is a rite of passage, for daily bathing and new austerities are performed in a highly ritualized manner to punctuate the experiences of devotees within even smaller frames of reference. What I am arguing is that we notice shorter rites of passage within the larger all-engulfing one. If, as I have suggested above, each bath is a symbolic death and rebirth, and each rite of separation also a rite of death ending with rebirth during the third phase, then the *pūjā* must be seen as smaller successive passages within the larger whole. I realize that this line of reasoning could be argued *ad infinitum* (e.g., each moment being a symbolic death and rebirth), but it is not my aim to carry the analogy beyond this point. I do feel, however, that understanding rites of passage in specific ethnographic contexts offers a potential to employ more fully the ideas of VAN GENNEP and TURNER, for the rites of Dharmaraj do suggest a sort of infinite regress into continuously smaller units of time, invoking a sense of time within time more reminiscent of TURNER's phrase "betwixt and between" than his notion of "time out of time." Time consciousness, then, in relation to ritual sequences could be seen from this point of view, which allows for the punctuation of smaller units of time within a larger temporal framework because *bhaktyās* share a sense of *durée*, as Henri Bergson once called it, an "inner time" which does not correspond to clock time.

This form of *durée* belongs to an experience of time which is shared by the devotees as a result of constant interaction generated by activities performed during

the ritual sequence.[25] Moreover, time as a distinctively shared experience among the devotees lends more credence to the idea that these temporary renunciants are liminars. It is while playing the role of liminar that the *bhaktyā* is most empowered to speak on equal terms to his Brahman counterparts, potentially creating the circumstances to negotiate more egalitarian action among and within the village's local caste system.

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[25] This is, of course, the crux of Alfred Schutz's mutual tuning-in relationship, which he defines as a "living together simultaneously in specific dimensions of time." See SCHUTZ 1951.

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POLITICS AND FOLK RELIGION IN THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION*

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Abstract: The several decades of totalitarian aggressive atheism have drastically changed the folk religion. In new political conditions this legacy remains very important, because it develops some typical features of contemporary religion–politics interrelation. The Orthodox religion became more and more linked with the political discourse. What was forbidden for a long period of decades out of a sudden became first official and then even obligatory, like atheism before. Some facts taken from Russian mass media of the nineties illustrate how the legacy of the Soviet past and the new popular version of Orthodoxy correlate with the politics.

Keywords: folk religion, politics, communist, Russia, the USSR, atheism, paganism, stereotypes, Orthodoxy, mass media

In this paper I will discuss some examples of relationship between folk religion and politics before, during and after the era of perestroika. I will also concentrate on the significance of the traditions and stereotypes in these links, exploring mainly the cases from my own experience.

It would be reasonable to start long before the crucial 1985, but it is impossible to do so in such a short talk. I will allow myself only to remember the fact that after long years of persecution of the church and the priesthood in Russia the very concepts of folk religion and politics acquired a very specific nature. Even more specific and diverse was their correlation, particularly if we take into account such basic oppositions as geographic (central–rural parts), ideological (strong–weak oppression of the officials), confessional (Christianity–Islam), sociological (communist bureaucracy–"ordinary" people), national (Russia–other nationality), etc. The role of the individual (e.g. family background, personality) is very important in every single occasion. We can speak of the rural regions as the places where in spite of the oppression of the local authorities and the lack of churches, religion, folk beliefs and folk faith were saved and honoured in form of as we call it folk Orthodoxy. It was characteristic not only for Russians, but for other nationalities living in the USSR as well. I will give only one example from my field work of this period. In 1984 I took my students to the former Moldavian Republic where Moldavians, Ukrainians, Russians and Bulgarians lived in big villages. I chose one village, I have been to be-

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fore. I knew that the head of the local committee was my colleague, who had graduated from the Moscow State University, German Department. When I explained to him the purpose of our expedition (to put down archaic traditions, folklore, etc.) he said briefly: "We fight against all this, you won't find anything interesting". Embarrassed, I still started to interrogate the people and the very first woman (the village teacher) I met told me that they still performed many rituals (like asking for rain and many others) in spite of the ban of the local communists. The pagan rite for rain was frequently followed by a service, a prayer to which the whole village came. "At least several drops of rain would fall from the sky", – concluded the teacher. Then I discovered that folk beliefs were a still crucial part of life not only for the elder, but for the younger people as well, who knew the rituals in detail and took part in some of them. My colleague definitely knew it, being born and brought up in this village. But he also knew that the cultural anthropologists or ethnolinguists at that time were not allowed to study folk religion. The scholars could not use the terminology, even in such innocent subjects, like, let's say folk calendar customs. The books on these topics were very rare as well. (I will add in brackets that several years later this field of research became very popular and the demand for the books on religion and folk traditions is huge).

Hypocrisy was part of the Soviet politician's attitude to religion and folk tradition. It is not surprising that there were (and still are) so many narratives describing how in a miraculous way atheists started to believe in God (Orthodox Miracles 1993, pp. 27–29). To be objective I have to add that there are many stories telling how communists started to believe in magic (like the evil eye, the importance of pagan commemorating acts, etc.). The canonical and folk Orthodoxy coexist even in depicting the images of politicians (Big Communists, as they are called in the popular tradition, which was a synonym for atheists, the believers in communist principles and ideals).

The several decades of totalitarian aggressive atheism have failed to destroy the folk religion. The attempts of the politicians (leaders and ideologists of the Communist Party) to create a new religion with new "saints", rituals, values and formulae were succesful only for a limited period of time. By the 80s the ideological clichés and the new-speak in the nonofficial discourse were only used in numerous anecdotes and jokes.

We are still not able to adequately analyse the role of perestroika in all the spheres of the life of an individual and the country as a whole. The consequences of reconstruction embrace everything – not only the ideology, philosophy, politics and economics, art, but also the language, mentality, religiosity of the people, their everyday habits, etc. What is primary and what is secondary here, it is difficult to judge, but, I think, the most interesting thing is the interrelation of different areas during this period of time. Such an example is the correspondence between politics and religion. It is a very topical problem now, and not only for Russia, but for other former socialist states as well.

When perestroika started and freedom and democracy step by step penetrated into the society, one could observe several tendences which are still relevant. Infor-

mation for a scholar was and still is everywhere – in the everyday life, in mass media, in church. The aggressive atheism of the officials gave place to religiosity. First of all, the revival of the Orthodox Church meant some material changes: opening of closed churches and monasteries,[1] reconstruction of the ruined churches, creating of Sunday schools for children and adults, publishing of the Bible and all sorts of religious literature, etc. The Orthodox religion became more and more linked with the political activity. What was forbidden for a long period of decades out of a sudden became first official and then even obligatory. I will never forget my impression when I first saw the slogan in front of the Kremlin: "Merry Christmas" instead of "Happy New Year, Comrades". It was a shock, which was doubled probably by the fact that in Russian "Merry Christmas" sounds not secularly, it definitely has some Church Slavonic characteristics (as you know the language of the Church is Slavonic, not modern Russian).

The physical presence of the religious practice at the end of the 80s became more and more perceptible. It could be compared to the Christianization of Russia by the scale. It was followed and supported by other tendencies in the society, for example the changing image of the mass media. Mass media which are tightly connected with politics (both official and nonofficial) started to grow in their quantity and to differentiate in their content. Thus the language of the newspapers, magazines, radio and TV diametrically changed. To speak on the faith, religiosity, on observance of celebrations, to quote the Bible became very popular. Sort of a fashion was and still is to use quotations from the Holy Gospels in the advertisements – a new item for the post-Soviet reality. Again aiming at creating an image as attractive as possible, the copy-writers transform the sentences making the sense opposite ('The last will be the first" – the slogan of a Russian bank, that disappeared after August, 17, 1998). The TV translation of liturgy, Easter service with comments became ritual. The politicians also changed diametrically. Many of them gave up their atheism and became 'pure' Christians. At the very beginning when Eltsin, Luzhkov and others just started to appear in these programs holding a candle in the church some people very wittily called them "candlesticks".

A very indicative part of the image of the modern Russian politicians is their religious practice. They do not think that the society cannot forget very quickly the atheistic position of the Communist Party, that the quotations from the New Testament in their speech cannot be perceived adequately. G. Zjuganov, General Secretary of the Committee of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, uses Christian allusions all the time, once in his interview on the radio he said: "Not the people, nor the God would understand and forgive us, if we take part in this demonstration". This tendency lasts, here is a very recent example: on the 14 of September (1999) after the explosions in Moscow the vice-president Gustov said on the radio: "I lighted a candle in the church, praying that Putin's Cabinet would not be

[1] Compare some statistics: the number of monasteries and nunneries has changed during the last decade from 18 to 400, the priesthood has doubled (HIEROMONK ILARION 1999).

disbanded".[2] To be a Christian is not only fashionable now (how it was at the beginning of perestroika), it is a must for officials. That's why all the public activity of our government (especially opening of the new banks, exhibitions, etc.) is often accompanied by the acts of consecration. Again, hypocrisy is part of the official policy in modern Russia, comparable to the behavior of their Soviet counterparts I described at the beginning.

These facts are on the surface. But there is something more specific which ties the politics with the religion and constitutes the political programmes of different parties. It is not characteristic for all the parties. A universal development of the concept of religion in the political discourse is the tight liaison of the religion with the ideas of nationalism and patriotism. Every day one can hear or read something which illustrates some of the points of this interrelation, especially now, when the election campaign started. Most interesting and objective facts can be found in the special publications of the "Russkaja Mysl" and "Nezavisimaja Gazeta".

I will give only two extreme examples, taken from the recent articles in mass media. Russia of the future in the programs of Christian political parties is the Saint Russia, based on the East Orthodoxy. The mixture of ideas allows the commentators to talk of "political racist neopaganism' (VERKHOVSKY 1999). One can find an interesting confirmation of this idea in the program of the "Orthodox Russian National Council": "Orthodoxy is the state religion of Russia. Together with this a serious research of the Pre-Christian culture and religion should be undertaken. Thus we unite the spiritual values, which in the whole make *national folk religion*... The Orthodox religion is cluttered up, 60% of it is not Russian, it is alien" (Op. cit.).

Another example – rather funny now – the information on the sect, the members of which venerate Lenin as God and think of him as the second part of Christ. They call themselves Communist Party "Unity Vsevolod" – Union of all confessions, nationalities and peoples, or cosmic communists. The specific feature of this movement is the idea of Lenin as Christ, but calling the two figures "two bases of the Universe, incarnations of principles 'in' and 'jan'" undoubtedly shows that this mixture of religious terms and concepts is very typical for the state of mind of the people for at least the last fifteen years (SEROV 1999).

These two publications give a critical point of view, while hundreds of smaller newspapers, church booklets, etc. sometimes contain such ideas which have nothing to do with the Orthodox religion but pretend that their position is the only right one. This mixture of Christian faith and so to say pagan beliefs, superstitions is quite evident in our parishes nowadays. The neofits who come to the church bring over their spiritual background which is far away from the Orthodox faith. I have to recall that when the freedom came to Russia, the search for new spiritual values was so intensive, and the lack of knowledge was so huge, that ordinary people reading thousands of publications just got lost. The old Russian folk beliefs (fortune-tellers, rituals,

[2] This sentence could be understood only in the context of the political history of last year, when three Prime Ministers were dismissed one after another.

everyday recommendations, demonology, weathercasts, etc.) often falsified could have been combined with whatever one can just think of – old Greek or Roman beliefs, Hindu rituals, esoteric ideas, etc. I remember once my elderly relative – woman in her 60s (baptized and active Russian Orthodox) called me and said that on that day at midnight I should fumigate the corners of the rooms. I said, Why? She answered that on the TV there was a program and that on this night people should venerate the Goddess Vesta, who helps the families to live in peace. Another thing from the spiritual practice of this woman is her visit to a healer who said to her that she was ill because of her sins. A priest was present there working together with the healer, so he read some prayers. "The healer told me I should come once more for a prayer and I will forget about my illness" – the lady went on. (The healer was an extrasense, as the Russians call them, they are very popular in Russia, there is a sort of cult of them and their abilities).

The mixture of magic and miracle can be observed everywhere. I was present in the church once when christening took place. I heard the lady who was preparing to become Godmother of a three-years old child saying: "Look at this man! (Actually, it was the priest.) He is holding light in his hands, some magic will happen now"[3]. We can find the same potpourri of words, symbols and beliefs in numerous advertisements of the new Russian magicians, healers, fortune-tellers. Some of the texts are incredible, like "Peter Smirnov. Apostle and Bishop of Black Magic. Your beloved will crawl to you on his knees. 500% guarantee". The cross, candles are in the neighbourhood of the cup with the medical symbol (the snake), the emblem of the Russian Monarchy (the two-headed eagle) and so on and so forth.

Light was partly shed on this problem in some recent publications (BUZIN 1999). The problem of contamination of Orthodoxy and paganism with sometimes dominating of the latter in the behavior of the parishioners is very serious now. One of the reasons for such a situation is that the parishioners do not understand the service, partly because of the archaic language, partly because people do not want to understand it. Before, when the books, even the Bible were not available they would have an excuse. Then the folk notions would cover the Orthodox ideas.[4] The border between folk tradition and Orthodox faith is very difficult to mark (and this is a long dispute already). Now the problem is of a different kind: the books and TV and radio programs on religion are so numerous, that to find the right way becomes difficult again. The books sold in the parishes which are supposed to educate the newly baptized contain information which is far away from the real faith – it is a sort of

[3] In Russian the words for 'magic' and 'miraculous' are partly synonyms. They come from different discourse, the first one definitely is associated with folk tales and folklore in the whole, it cannot be used in the canonic texts about the saints, etc. If it is used, it has negative sense, opposed to Christianity as paganism.

[4] We know this fact very well from our field research from the beginning of the 80s. The situation has not changed by now. Folk Orthodoxy has its own concepts, it can be very firm in some ideas, which compare or even mix personages, like Eve and Mary, Christ and Nicholas, etc. (it is universal, compare the Bulgarian data – BADALANOVA 1999). The folk tradition ascribes some relations to the saints, as, for example, I was told by an old Russian Christian lady, born in a village close to Moscow, that Saint Nicholas is the Father of Jesus Christ, and many other examples in our archives.

strange superstitions of modern times. For example a series of books "Give me an advice, Father" discusses whether a priest is allowed to drive a car or to go to the swimming pool. The answer is "No". Another open public discussion which started in July-August in Russia, was whether it was sinful to have a dog as a pet at home.

To my surprise I found the practising Orthodoxy and folk faith in their total mixture at a very sad occasion, when my aunt died. We called an agent, who showed himself well-prepared from the point of view of the church and folk traditions. He was absolutely sure in his statements (by the way the lack of hesitating, the typical Soviet desire to teach everybody and everywhere still exist in our country). He knew everything in detail. He even could foresee his clients' political preferences. When choosing the colour of the coffin (there were two colours – blue and red) he tried to help us asking "what are the colours for the newly-born boys and girls?" When he saw that we were still choosing, he said: "Don't hesitate, red does not mean the Communist in the funeral. The communists do not bury their comrades in red coffins". This case deserves a special analysis, due to the unbelievable chaotic contamination of the information taken from different world religions, but I will stop here because of lack of time.

To conclude I want to underline that in spite of the new conditions in our country (democracy, revival of the church, change of values, etc.) some stereotypes still work. The mass religion is very pragmatic, almost pagan in its essence, it does not presuppose Faith, or obedience, or observance of the Commandments. The mixture of concepts is widely used by the politicians who aim in their programs at exploiting the Orthodoxy in the form it exists in modern Russia.

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SUBJECT POSITIONS: MONARCHY, CIVIL RELIGION AND FOLK RELIGION IN BRITAIN

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Abstract: As Head of State, Head of the Church of England and the living symbol of the national unity, the British monarch embodies the political and religious institutions of the United Kingdom. Consequently, the ceremonies and events involving the monarch and the royal family constitute a central part of the civil religion of the nation-state. One potential problematic of the official discourse on national identity made available through the civil religion is the principle of heredity, which by elevating the status of royal birth simultaneously lowers the status of the mass of the people. However, this positioning does not cause widespread offence, or provoke general hostility towards the institution of monarchy. On the contrary, as the public mourning for Diana Princess of Wales demonstrated, royalty has the power to mobilise the sentiments and actions of millions. Drawing upon fieldwork conducted over the past ten years, my concern in this paper is with unofficial public participation in royal ceremonials and events as folk version of the official civil religion. More particularly I am concerned with the ways in which these folk participants negotiate their socially inferior positioning by switching between the competing discourses of democratic egalitarianism and of heredity status, discourses which the concept of constitutional monarchy seeks to combine.

Keywords: religion, state religion, England, national identity, mourning for Diana Princess of Wales, constitutional monarchy

One summer evening in 1990 I stood squashed amongst a mass of people, contained behind crush barriers, outside a cinema in London's West End. This crowd was not waiting to see the film, they were there to see the Duchess of York arrive for a charity performance. When the Duchess stepped from her highly polished, chauffeur driven car, she paused briefly to wave and smile at the crowd and the press photographers, before advancing towards the official reception party lined up to greet her. As she swept past my section of the cheering crowd, resplendent in evening gown and diamond tiara, I overheard an American onlooker complain to his companion, 'Now I really feel like a peasant!' From the tone of self-disgust in his voice it was evident that his use of the term 'peasant' was not being used to denote an identity as a farmer, but carried the connotation of being a person of very low social standing.

Like all public appearances by members of the British royal family this one by the Duchess, was surrounded by ceremonial which, as DOUGLAS (1970) reminds us, serves to highlight social and cultural boundaries. It also dramatises who people are and who others will take them to be (BUCKLEY–KENNEY 1995). For the American this was an event in which the boundaries of social superiority and inferiority be-

Fig. 1. The Queen receiving flowers from the "real royalists". Photograph Colin Edwards

tween royalty and the crowd were being highlighted and, in the dramatisation of the high status of the Duchess, he read a corresponding statement of his own social inferiority. However, although a similar response was potentially open to everyone else present, the rest of the cheering and excited crowd gave no indication that they shared his interpretation. On the contrary, everyone else appeared to be experiencing the event in a positive, rather than a negative way.

This situation provides, in microcosm, an example of a paradox of British sociopolitical culture. A particularly vivid summary of this is given by Edgar WILSON (1989) who describes the British constitutional monarchy as being:

> 'incompatible with democracy in principle, yet in practice, amidst widespread and caste based inequality, injustice and real deprivation, the ancient symbol and instrument of hereditary privilege remains unchallenged. It apparently even grows in popularity' (WILSON 1989: 1).

WILSON's critical stance also demonstrates that negative interpretations of the monarchy are not restricted to Americans, but are also made by Britons (see for example, HITCHENS 1990; WILSON 1989: NAIRN 1988; HAMILTON 1975; BIRNBAUM 1955). However, like that of the American in the crowd, they represent a minority voice in British culture. This situation is not without political significance. Should negative interpretations become the dominant voice, then the continuance of Britain as a constitutional monarchy would be threatened. However, so long as positive interpretations predominate, the constitutional monarchy is likely to remain unchallenged and secure. It is this situation which provides the wider context of my interest in how people construct and maintain a positive interpretation of the relationship between themselves and the monarchy.

THE REAL ROYALISTS

So far I have been using the term 'people', but in a large scale society, this is too undifferentiated and nebulous a term. My focus of interest is, therefore, a small group of men and women who make a particularly active engagement with the monarchy. I became aware of existence of the 'real royalists', as they style themselves, in the autumn of 1988. During 1989 and 1990 I carried out fieldwork with them, as research for a doctoral thesis in social anthropology (ROWBOTTOM 1994) and for an accompanying ethnographic film (HENLEY–ROWBOTTOM 1993). A second period of intensive fieldwork followed in 1996 and 1997 for a television documentary (HENLEY–ROWBOTTOM 1997) and most recently during the mourning for Diana Princess of Wales (ROWBOTTOM 1999). In between these periods of extensive fieldwork I have maintained contact with key informants. It is ethnographic data from this ten year involvement with the royalists that informs this paper.

All the royalists I worked closely with collected pictures, books, ceramics, or other memorabilia of the royal family, examples of which were displayed in their homes. Some of these collections are small, but others have grown large enough to fill a whole room in their homes. Many of these objects are commercially produced ceramic commemoratives of coronations, royal weddings, births, anniversaries and other events in the life cycle of the Queen and her family. Other items, such as scrap books, photograph albums and framed individual photographs, they create for themselves. Some of the most highly prized images of the royal family are the photographs the royalists themselves have taken when attending royal visits.

The term 'royal visit' refers to the official visits made by members of the royal family to hundreds of civic, commercial and charitable organisations throughout Britain, during the course of any one year. At the end of each of these visits the royal visitor usually walks over to the crowd and exchanges greetings and brief pleasantries with some of the onlookers. This stage of the proceedings, which has become known as the 'walkabout', is central to the royalists' activities as it provides the chance of a face to face meeting with the royal family. In pursuit of this goal, they regularly undertake long journeys, stand for hours in all weathers, finally drawing

Fig. 2. The Queen receiving a photograph from a "real royalist". Photograph Anne Rowbottom

the royal personage towards them through the offering of a gift. These gifts usually consist of flowers, or a photograph of the intended recipient that the royalist took at a previous meeting. Although the walkabout is part of the official proceedings, the royalists presence and presentations have no official status, they are entirely self motivated. Indeed, it is the willingness to *regularly and voluntarily* undertake the discomforts of travelling and waiting in the vagaries of the British climate in order to meet with the royal family that constitutes their definition of a 'real royalist'.

The total number of people sharing the royalists' practices is difficult to calculate with any certainty. As they are not part of any formal organisation there is no register of interested people. Consequently, their association with each other is based on the friendship networks that develop out of encounters with like minded people at royal visits. As attendance at these events necessitates travelling to another part of the country, few of the royalists live in the same geographical area. Friendships have to be maintained through letters and telephone calls in which information is exchanged and arrangements made to meet together at future events. Through my key informant's friendship network I met around sixty royalists who regularly travel the country. In addition there were others that I encountered only once, as well as people I never met, but heard about in the royalists' stories, or who featured in media reports. It is, therefore, likely that there are other networks in existence, as well as other individuals who do not wish to join up with others. I also regularly encoun-

tered people who went to all the royal events which took place in or around their home town or city, but who were not able or willing to travel long distances.

The core of my key informant's friendship network, that is the people with whom he and I most frequently travelled, consisted of fourteen people; nine women and five men. Three of the women were over sixty, one was a teenager, and the remaining five were middle aged. Of the five men, one was a teenager and another was in his late twenties; the other three were middle aged. Both the men and the women were almost exclusively drawn from an upper working, or lower middle class background, without the practices they had developed none would normally expect to have close encounters with royalty.

Although only a small group in relation to the total population of Britain and even as a proportion of the crowds at royal events, the royalists are representative of more widespread sentiments. They often remark that 'many people feel like we do' and this is evident, not only amongst the crowds that turn out for royal visits, but in descriptions of public responses to large scale ceremonials such as, the Coronation (SHILS–YOUNG 1953); the Investiture of Prince Charles as Prince of Wales (BLUMLER et al 1971); the Queen's Silver Jubilee (ZEIGLER 1977). The most recent large scale expression of public sentiment was the public mourning for Diana Princess of Wales (WALTERS 1999). As I have pointed out elsewhere (ROWBOTTOM 1998), the main gifts offered to the Princess in death, such as flowers and her own image, reflected the main items the royalists offered to her in life and, indeed, continue to offer to living members of the royal family.

In discussing the form taken by the public mourning folklorists have readily recognised this as the expression of a folk or vernacular religiosity. This is especially apparent in the construction of shrines (BOWMAN 1999; CHANDLER 1999) at sacred places, and 'an obvious parallel between the journey to Kensington Palace Gates [the home of the Princess] and the purposive journey to some sacred place which is the core of most pilgrimage' (CHANDLER 1999: 150). Following from this my present point is that the folk religiosity, readily recognised in the mourning for Diana, is also to be found in the regular practices of the royalists. They too undertake pilgrimages to sites temporarily made sacred by the presence of royalty to offer flowers and images and, in the display of images and other iconic objects in their homes, they can be said to construct domestic shrines.

Religiosity is also apparent in the experience of transcendency described in the royalists' accounts of how their meetings with royalty put them in contact with their membership of the nation. In the words of one man:

> 'Unless you have experienced it you can't understand it. Whenever I stand in front of the Queen, or any member of the royal family I am always filled with such feelings of loyalty and pride in being British.'

When, as often happened, he made this, or a very similar statement, other royalists present readily agreed that this was also their experience. In describing the meaning

Fig. 3. A domestic "shrine". Photograph Anne Rowbottom

their activities held for them, they invariably made an association with 'Britain', or with 'being British'. The most common kind of statements being, 'The monarchy means Britain', or 'Basically, its about being British'. A strong belief in the royal family as the symbol and guarantee of national identity is evident in a statement made by a female royalist: 'If we lose the royal family what is there? We are just an island with some people on it with nothing to say we are British'.

The equation of the monarchy with the nation is not an idiosyncratic one. Michael BILLIG, in an analysis of conversations about the royal family recorded in sixty three English households, also found expressions of belief in the monarchy as the guarantee of national identity (BILLIG 1992: 33–35). Nor is the equation an insignificant one. What the royalists express as a personal experience echoes the official ideology of the civil religion of the British nation-state.

CIVIL RELIGION

Civil religion is a sociological concept which has been defined as 'any set of beliefs and rituals, related to the past, present, and/or future of a people ('nation') which are understood in some transcendental fashion' (HAMMOND 1976: 171). The concept describes practices intended to generate loyalty to a particular nation state (BOCOCK 1985:) in ways which transcend the boundaries of difference within a nation. Transcendence, integration and loyalty are said to be generated through public ceremonies designed to promote national unity and social cohesion (BELLAH 1967). Civil religion is religious, therefore, in the Durkheimian sense of putting people in touch with the transcendent, through an engagement with symbols and ceremonies. It is also religious in the anthropological sense of providing 'a plausible myth of the ordering of existence' (CLARKE–HOOVER 1997:17). The usefulness of the concept lies in its proposal of a religious form through which national unity can be expressed in a heterogeneous and highly differentiated society, as well as in the way 'it proposes a basis for the relationship of the individual to the larger modern society' (MCGUIRE 1992: 184). In Britain, where the sovereign is constitutionally the Head of State, Supreme Governor of the Church of England and the living symbol of national unity (COI 1983: 10; MORRAH 1958: 41), the monarchy retains its traditional role as the constitutional, religious and symbolic centre of the nation. The public appearances of members of the royal family, which are surrounded by ceremonial, form a central component in the official civil religion of the British nation state (BOCOCK 1985; THOMPSON 1986).

The claim that any religion, civil or orthodox, can provide a 'sacred canopy' (BERGER 1967) able to unite and pull together all the complex elements of a modern society has been subject to criticism. Although I accept the view that a totally integrative function is 'not wholly convincing' (TURNER 1991: 58) as the data from my fieldwork demonstrates, the concept cannot be easily dismissed. Therefore, rather than making exaggerated claims for an integrative function I suggest a more productive approach lies in viewing civil religion as a *discourse* on national unity. As this is put into the public domain through the agencies of the state it constitutes an *official* discourse in which the monarchy represents the symbol and the guarantee of British identity. It follows from this that, rather than debating whether or not civil religion can have an integrating effect, it is more useful to explore how people interpret and use the discourse.

The political significance of this is indicated by Christopher HITCHENS, when he observes that the monarchy as the guarantee of national identity, 'can only be true for a person who sincerely believes it' (HITCHENS 1990: 34). However, having made this observation HITCHENS then treats 'sincere believers' as unworthy of serious consideration, preferring instead to present an alternative republican discourse. The problem with this kind of approach is that it fails to take account of the importance of 'sincere belief' in the processes that reproduce the 'truth' of the civil religion. It also misses the creativity essential to this process for, as already noted, the discourse of the civil religion is a paradoxical one. Although the Queen may provide 'the living

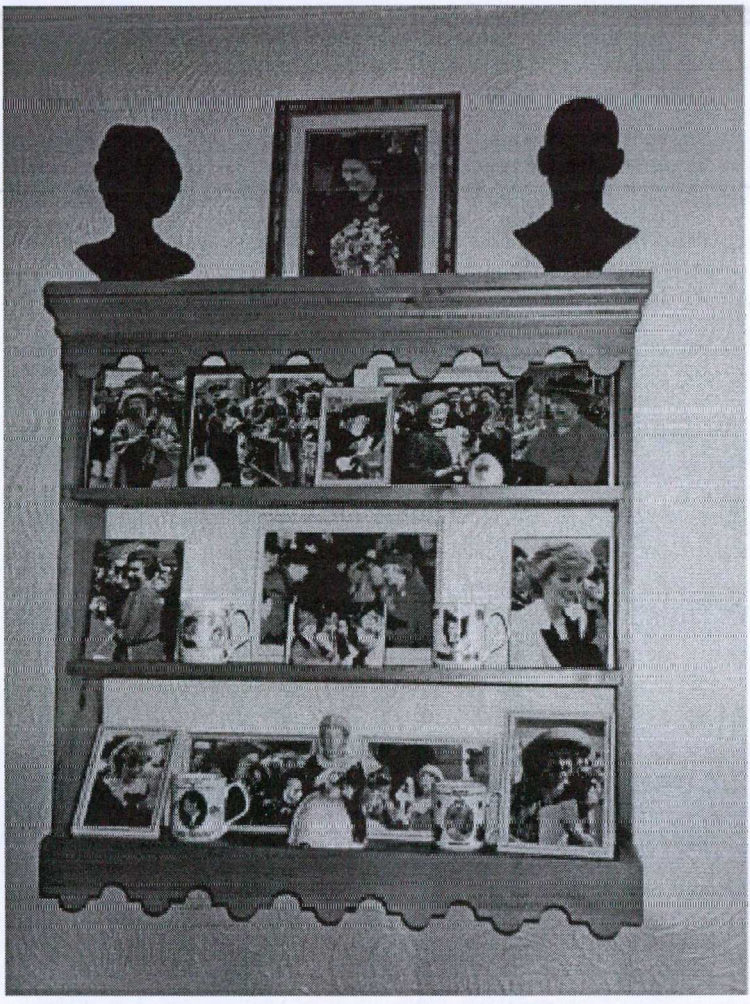

Fig. 4. A domestic "shrine". Photograph Anne Rowbottom

symbol of national unity' (COI 1983:10), her position at the apex of society is premised on hierarchy, making the monarchy a means of categorising people into the social superior and the socially inferior (HAYDEN 1987: 5). The monarchy is, therefore, simultaneously the symbol of unity and difference. This contradiction has to be negotiated by those, such as the royalists, who recognise themselves as being addressed by the discourse of the civil religion and who willingly consent to their 'subjection'. The rest of this paper is concerned with the way the royalists construct a positive view of the monarchy, the nation and themselves.

FRAMING EVENTS

Acknowledgement of difference provides the royalists with the knowledge that guides their actions as royalists, setting limitations on what is and what is not possible. Difference provides them with their primary interpretive framework (GOFFMAN 1974). Within this framing it is axiomatic that the royal family represent the nation by virtue of their traditional status at the apex of the social hierarchy. Acknowledgement of difference is evident in the royalists' description of the Queen and the royal family as being worthy of 'respect and admiration' because they are 'very special people'. This contrasts with their descriptions of themselves as 'ordinary people' who are privileged to be able to speak to the royal family.

However, in elaborating on the meaning of their own activities the royalists switch to the frame of unity. As one of the women expressed it: 'by going on royal visits, being interested in royalty and talking about them I believe I am helping to actually keep the monarchy in the country ...'. The importance of this, as previously noted, is the royalists' belief that without the monarchy we would have nothing to say that we are British. In this way they rhetorically construct themselves as engaged in a joint enterprise with the royal family to maintain the monarchy and, therefore, British national identity. This sense of partnership is also evident in the way the royalists view their activities. They describe themselves as 'a familiar face in the crowd', with whom the royals can 'hold a friendly conversation', or 'share a laugh and a joke' about previous encounters. In this way the royalists see themselves as lightening the burden of greeting hundreds of strangers who are often 'overawed and tongue tied' in the unfamiliar presence of royalty.

Like all rhetorical framing the royalists understanding of their relationship to the royal family, the monarchy and the nation, is heavily dependent upon the co-operation of others. In securing the cooperation of the royal family the royalists utilise the conventions of gift giving. Offering a gift invokes a cultural obligation to receive (MAUSS 1990, 1950) and acceptance apparently confirms the donor's idea of the recipient and of the relationship that exists between them (SCHWARTZ 1967). Conversely, the rejection of a gift denies the donors' view themselves, the recipient and their relationship. The co-operation of the royal family in accepting gifts is, therefore, essential to the maintenance of the royalists' beliefs. The following incident provides an example of a meaning-threatening situation and of the way one royalist constructed a transformative account of what had taken place.

A TRANSFORMATIVE ACCOUNT

One very cold afternoon I stood with five royalists around the midpoint of a walkabout by Diana Princess of Wales. Three of the royalists, two middle aged women and one young man, had brought flowers, the other two, a young woman and an older man, had each brought framed photographs of the Princess which they had taken at a previous meeting. The young woman, who for the sake of clarity I shall

Fig. 5. Part of a crowd gathering to see the Queen. Photograph Anne Rowbottom

refer to as 'Beth', was a little worried that, because her photograph was very slightly out of focus, it might not be of sufficiently good quality to offer to the Princess. The others, after admiring the gilt frame in which the photograph had been placed, assured Beth that the Princess would like it. The walkabout began and proceeded according to everyone's expectations with the Princess shaking hands with as many people as possible and accepting gifts in her usual friendly way. However, when she reached Beth the following exchange took place:

Princess:	Is that for me?'
Beth:	I'm afraid so.
Princess:	Afraid so?, Why don't you ... Will you keep that? I've got plenty of pictures
Beth:	Are you sure?.
Princess:	Yes. You keep that.
Beth:	Is it that bad?
Princess:	It isn't that bad, No. I can look in the mirror if I want pictures. You keep that.
Beth:	Whatever you say Ma'am.
Princess:	You keep that.

The Princess then moved on, accepting the gifts of others in the same way as before. Because the Princess was always held to be a warm, friendly and caring person, her response to Beth appeared as unusual as it was unexpected. Consequently, the royalists were presented with a meaning-threatening experience that required an explanation which would restore their fundamental assumptions. Immediately after the Princess had left one of the women, who for the sake of clarity I shall refer to as 'Patricia', took me aside and began to develop an explanation of what had taken place.

Patricia began by stating in a puzzled and somewhat shocked tone:

> The Princess didn't take Beth's photograph did she? Poor Beth, she must be very upset. I don't understand why it wasn't accepted, do you? Perhaps she didn't take it because it was in a frame and she thought it was too expensive for her to accept from a member of the public.

In explaining the difficulty that might arise over an expensive gift, Patricia stressed the necessity of remembering that, however friendly the Princess might be, she was a member of the royal family. As royalty do not usually accept gifts from ordinary members of the public, it was a privilege to be able to offer them things and, therefore, in order to keep this privilege it was important not to seem presumptuous. Inexpensive items, such as flowers, or unframed photographs were appropriate, but more expensive items were not, as these might seem to presume too close a relationship. Patricia's worry was that if some royalists were perceived as being overly familiar with the royal family, then they might stop accepting gifts from the public altogether. On reflection, however, Patricia realised that as the Princess had accepted a framed photograph from another royalist, her explanation required modification.

Patricia then tried to construct an explanation around Beth's physical appearance, noting that, as Beth was not very tall and of slight build, people regularly thought her to be much younger than her nineteen years. Therefore, she reasoned, it was perfectly possible that the Princess had also assumed Beth to be much younger than her actual age. If so, perhaps the Princess thought that, unlike the adults around her, Beth could not afford to give a photograph in a frame and this was why she asked Beth to keep it. It was also possible, Patricia continued, that if the Princess had thought of Beth as a child, she may have thought she was merely being shown something that a young girl valued and not realised it was being offered as a gift. Perhaps Beth had held it out in too hesitant a manner, suggesting to the Princess that it was being shown, rather than offered to her. In support of this, Patricia reasoned that the Princess could have understood Beth's, 'I'm afraid so', in response to her own question, 'Is that for me?', to mean that the photograph was something with which Beth was reluctant to part, rather than intended as an apology for offering a slightly blurred picture.

That the Princess' refusal had been kindly meant was evident, Patricia thought,

by her pleasant and friendly manner towards Beth. The photograph may not have been accepted, but there had been nothing nasty in the way it was refused. It was as if the Princess, knowing that Beth valued the picture, had wanted her to keep it for herself. Consequently, Patricia reasoned, Beth should not be embarrassed or distressed by what had taken place. Finally she went on to suggest that the photograph had now acquired something extra special as, in saying to Beth 'you keep that', it was as if the photograph had become a gift from the Princess to Beth herself. Patricia was pleased with this conclusion and she resolved to make this point to Beth later.

DISCUSSION

In constructing her interpretation Patricia transforms a potentially meaning-threatening encounter into something that restores her understanding of the character of the Princess and her relationship with the royalists. The sociologist, Erving GOFFMAN, describes this as 'remedial work', an activity motivated by the possibility that there has been a deliberate intention to cause offence. That is to say, in constructing her account Patricia understands the possibility of 'interpretations of the act that maximise either its offensiveness to others or its defaming implications for the actor himself [sic]' (GOFFMAN 1971: 138–139). The task that Patricia has undertaken is to prevent a possible or, in GOFFMAN's terminology, a *virtual* offence becoming an actual one. The problem she faces is that the potential offensiveness of the Princess' action lies in the way it turns the logic of the gift against the royalists. An example of the threat this poses is apparent in an interpretation made by Leslie WOODHEAD, a television producer who saw video footage of the encounter between the Princess and Beth. According to WOODHEAD, the refusal of Beth's photograph was an occasion when the Princess bent under the strain of the royalists' attentions which, at times 'must be more than the royals can bear' (WOODHEAD 1991: 15). This, the worst possible interpretation, threatens the royalists' meaning system by denying the value they attach to their practices. It is this possibility that Patricia's remedial work must avoid confirming.

Motive and intent are significant factors in determining whether an offence has actually taken place, but only the potential, or virtual offender has direct knowledge of these. Usually, clarification can be sought from, or is volunteered by the virtual offender (GOFFMAN 1971). In this case, however, the social difference between the protagonists is such that the royalists cannot ask for a clarification of intent from the Princess herself. Instead it is Patricia who undertakes an explanation that will make safe a disruptive experience. By initially confirming that Beth's gift was the only one to be refused, Patricia established that an offence *might* have taken place, but effectively located the problem within the parameters of a specific interaction, rather than a response to the whole group. The rest of the explanation could then concentrate on the particular circumstances of this one encounter between the Princess and Beth.

Patricia's remedial work then began in the interpretive framework of difference. The inequalities of relative social status were highlighted in the suggestion that, by offering an apparently expensive gift, Beth was claiming too close a relationship. In Patricia's account this transgression of the status boundaries not only weakens the obligation to receive (MAUSS 1990, 1950), but also means that the Princess displayed the right relationship to the rules of the social order governing interactions between royalty and commoners. This achieves one aim of remedial work in respect of the Princess, in so far as it minimises the defaming implications for her moral character (GOFFMAN 1971). It is not fully successful, however, as it retains the suggestion that there was a deliberate intent on the part of the Princess to assert her superior status and to remind everyone else of their relative inferiority. In avoiding the danger of confirming this negative possibility, Patricia's developing explanation then switched to the interpretive framework of unity.

In underestimating the age of Beth and seeing her as not much more than a young girl, Patricia constructed the Princess as being just like everyone else. Her behaviour is now to be understood in terms of what anyone would think and do. In this framing unity takes the form of royalty being just 'ourselves writ large' (WILLIAMSON 1986: 76) and their actions can be understood through the knowledge acquired in ordinary, everyday living (BILLIG 1992). Patricia's attribution of the actions of the Princess to an understandable and common mistake offers a mitigating claim common to remedial work, namely, that 'the circumstances were such as to make the act radically different from what it appears to have been' (GOFFMAN 1971: 140). That is to say, having wrongly identified Beth as a young girl, the Princess behaves in a protective way, refusing to deprive her of an apparently treasured possession. In this way her actions are radically transformed. Rather than an assertion of social superiority, the action of the Princess becomes one that any responsible and sympathetic adult would adopt towards a young person. In this way Patricia can acknowledge the refusal of the gift as the act of a social superior but, by applying the norms of everyday life, the basis of the superior and inferior relationship is changed. Rather than royal and commoner, the relationship becomes that of adult and child in which the intent of the Princess is not a potentially disturbing assertion of social superiority, but a highly acceptable expression of protectiveness and concern towards a young person.

Finally, in effecting a closure of her account, Patricia returned to the frame of difference and constructed the Princess as an extraordinary person. The magic of monarchy is suggested in the way Beth's picture is said to have gained some special quality through contact with the Princess. In terms of both difference and unity the cooperation of the Princess in confirming the royalists' view of their relationship with the monarchy and, therefore, the nation, has been re-established to Patricia's satisfaction.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Patricia's interpretation is constructed in a very different way from that of the American who provided the starting point for this paper. Like the negative interpretations of constitutional monarchy made by the British republicans (WILSON 1989; HITCHENS 1990; HAMILTON 1975; BIRNBAUM 1955) the response of the American is constructed solely within the interpretive framework of difference. In contrast, Patricia negotiates the possibility of making a negative interpretation of monarchy by switching her explanation from the framework of difference, to that of unity, and then back to difference again. Switching in this way allows her to construct an account in which a potentially demeaning experience can be transformed into a reaffirmation of the relationship between the royalists, the monarchy and the nation.Through the use of difference and unity as alternative and relatively discrete frames of interpretation Patricia is able to negotiate the central paradox of constitutional monarchy and the civil religion. In her remedial work Patricia is following the method widely used by the royalists when explaining the meaning their encounters with royalty hold for them. By using difference and unity as alternative interpretive frames the royalists are able to avoid confronting the contradictions inherent in the central symbol of the civil religion.

This process of negotiation is not without political significance given that the idea of the royal family as the guarantee of national identity is fundamental to the discourse of the civil religion. The importance of understanding the way the larger population of Britain negotiates this official discourse is likely to increase as the British political structure undergoes a substantial change. The present political situation includes a movement not only towards greater European unity, but also to an internal devolving of government to the constituent nations of Great Britain. The outcome of these changes remains uncertain. One possibility is that the break-up of Britain as a unified state has begun, another is that a movement towards a federal state will take place. Whatever the outcome, a crisis of national identity seems likely which promises to be especially acute in England, where 'British' and 'English' are often treated as synonymous. In this developing situation the existing form of civil religion, centring on the monarchy, will also be subject to change. It could provide the official symbol of a pan-British identity, or it could become a focus for the development of a separate English nationalism. Alternatively, of course, the monarchy could fail to provide an adequate symbol of a new national identity and be replaced by something different. In the context of Britain and its constitutional monarchy, the way these changes are working out provides a relevant topic for research. What I have tried to demonstrate in this paper is that in understanding the development of these processes the folk religiosity that surrounds the official discourse of the civil religion provides a relevant topic for further exploration and theorising.

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"WE WERE LED BY THE LORD IN A SPECIAL WAY..."

VISIONS, EXPLICATIONS AND REALITY IN A TWENTIETH CENTURY CALVINIST CONGREGATION

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Abstract: The main religious lay-leader of the Hungarian Calvinists living in Carpathian Ukraine was the peasant-prophetess, Mrs. Mariska Borku (1910–1978). Her higly important work, the so-called "Third Testament" is a manuscript, written under the influence of the Holy Spirit. It was considered by Mrs. Mariska Borku and her followers as a holy text, a part of the Bible. These almost 800 bibličal "quasi loci" were spread in hand-written copies and were read aloud at religious meetings in the Hungarian villages of Carpathian Ukraine, even 10–15 years after her death. Beside the biblical paraphrases, religious songs and prayers, one fourth of the text consists of her visions. The prophetess never explained these visions and the Holy Spirit's "verbs" to her followers – only announced them. Recently the largest religious community of her followers, mostly women over fifty, exists in the village of Dercen. Its lay-leader, Miss Ida Balla, can explain the Words of the "Third Testament", and the visions of Mrs. Borku on the occasion of their private religious service Sunday afternoons.

My study offers a short survey of the historical and political situation of the area between 1920 and 1995, in which the emphasised folk religion played a very important role in the survival of national identity and in strengthening the faith of the Hungarian inhabitants living in a very often tragic minority status.

I illustrate my presentation with original visionary texts of the "Third Testament", and their actual-political exegesis given by the recent lay-leader of Mrs. Mariska Borku's followers.

Keywords: religious lay-leader, peasant-prophetess, Hungarian Calvinists, Carpathian Ukraine, influence of the Holy Spirit, manuscript, the so-called "Third Testament", private religious service, survival of national identity, minority status

A special phenomenon of Calvinist folk religion in Carpathian Ukraine is a peasant-prophetess, Mariska Borku (1910–1978) and the still existing circle of her followers. Since 1989 I have been dealing with the activity of this prophetess, her personality, and the social and intellectual influence and folklore of her teachings.[1]

The region where Mariska Borku lived makes this theme especially fascinating. This part (Sub-Carpathia) of today's Ukraine belonged to Hungary before the First World War when 60% of the population were Ruthenians, 25% Hungarians and the rest Jews, Romanians and Germans.[2] Under the terms of the Treaty of Trianon, the territory was annexed to Czecho-Slovakia. The Czech rule lasted from May 1919 till October 1939 when it was reoccupied by the Hungarians who lost it again in 1944.

[1] KÜLLŐS 1993, 1998, 1999. I did fieldwork on four occasions (spring 1989, autumn 1992, summer 1993 and 1995) in the company of Calvinist Dean Ambrus Molnár.

[2] Cf. SZABÓ 1993.

The multiethnic Sub-Carpathia belonged to Ukraine for a short while, then in July 1945 became part of the Soviet Union. The ethnocide carried out between 1944 and '47 at the order of Stalin was only recently revealed. All Hungarian and German men between the ages of 18 and 50 from this region were interned in November 1944 on the pretext of "three days of work". Only a half to two-thirds of the men returned years later from the prisoner-of-war camps. (Unfortunately, there are still no precise figures on the numbers of internments and deaths.)[3] Since December 1991 Sub-Carpathia has been part of newly independent Ukraine but this has not brought much in the way of positive change for the remaining 155 000 to 160 000 Hungarians, who still constitute the biggest national minority in the region. Because of the difficulty in securing a livelihood, Hungarians, particularly intellectuals and tradesmen, have been migrating to Hungary in a steady stream since 1991.

I have sketched in this background to give an idea of the unstable historical and political conditions in which a Calvinist Hungarian peasant woman with two children was "called" by the Holy Spirit to preach in October 1936 in Tiszaágtelek. It will also give a better understanding of why the Hungarian minority, repeatedly confused in its identity and nationality, persecuted for its religion and living a precarious existence, needed and still needs to believe in this lay religious leader.[4]

The activity of Mariska Borku over a period of 40 years has two results and traces that can be examined from the angle of folkloristics, history of religion and cultural anthropology.

One is the so-called Third Testament (*Lettszövetség*), a manuscript written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, combining texts of various genres, which is a document not only of the work of a peasant woman who preached for 40 years, but also reflects her spiritual experiences and theological views. Mariska Borku and her followers regarded this writing as the third part of the Bible, a renewed covenant with the Lord proclaimed by the Holy Spirit, and it is still read at religious services held in the family and homes. Manuscript copies of varying length can still be found in Calvinist villages of Sub-Carpathia. This is understandable since, up to the collapse of the Soviet Union (1990), official religious practice was regarded as a seditious activity, and it was impossible to obtain Hungarian-language printed religious materials, Bibles, prayer books or hymn books. Anyone who wanted such material made hand-written copies in exercise books from old publications borrowed from whoever would lend them, or from other people's manuscripts, and read these. To my greatest surprise, I found that in the seventies and eighties people in Sub-Carpathia longing for religious literature made copies from each other's exercise books of Milton's Paradise Lost in Hungarian translation. In these circumstances the Third Testament written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit filled a keenly-felt

[3] György DUPKA 1993.

[4] Mariska Borku was not the only Sub-Carpathian peasant-prophet in the 20th century. A prophetess was active in 1938–50 in the neighbouring village of Nagydobrony. One of my students wrote a PhD thesis on her personality and her religious activity which was known in a much more limited circle. For details on this, see SÁNDOR 1998 and 1999.

need. The followers of the prophetess are still able to quote from it by heart and revere it as a norm. The work is thus not only a constituent part of modern peasant literacy but also of religious oral tradition in Sub-Carpathia. (This is now true only for the generation over 50.)

The other phenomenon to be examined from the angle of religious ethnology is the existence of the so-called peasant ecclesiolas, small prayer groups formed within the Calvinist congregations in Hungarian villages of Sub-Carpathia (Nagydobrony, Dercen, Fornos, Csongor). The faithful who regard themselves as believers in the Third Testament and live in spiritual fraternity now represent no more than 2 to 5% of the different congregations, but everywhere they are the most fervently religious core of the community.

I have chosen as the basic text for this paper the longest folk manuscript known to me, a copy of the Third Testament done by a woman in Dercen (Róza Fodor, 1928). It contains 780 "Words". Out of these 780 religious texts of various genres, 183 (more than a quarter) are narratives of visions.[5]

In interpreting and analysing the visions of Mariska Borku I relied on two related sources:

a) visions recorded in writing in the Third Testament,[6]

b) narratives living in oral tradition, containing visions, dreams and miraculous recoveries related to her prophetic activity, or explaining her written Words and visions and applying them to current events.

In this paper I shall deal with popular interpretation of a few of the prophetess' visions of historical, current political or local relevance.

Mariska Borku was "called" at the age of 26, after family problems and illnesses, in a vision accompanied by hallucinations, in the same way as the biblical prophets.[7] She thought these unusual phenomena were a sign of her approaching death, and only gradually became aware that they were the will of God: *"...I was found to be faithful in small things and so He entrusted a spiritual family to me. I tend the flock under the guidance of the only shepherd."* (445)

I found on the occasion of my first collecting trip that Mariska Borku only explained the Words learnt from the Holy Spirit and the visions if she was specifically called on to do so. Her task was only to transmit the divine manifestations. When I

[5] I was able to make a photocopy of this manuscript notebook in October 1992. Its owner lent it only reluctantly and for a short time, since it was part of her daily religious practice to read the Third Testament. For understandable reasons, it was even more difficult to obtain the autograph manuscripts of Mariska Borku for the purpose of making photocopies. It was not until June 1993 that her daughter decided to lend her mother's "sacred" writing. She was afraid that without it, trouble would befall her house and family. However, she also dreamt that the time would come when this sacred text could be published, so she regarded this research as the fulfilment of her prophetic dream. Up to 1993 I had copies only of the autograph copy of the first 187 "Words" – which Mariska Borku had sent to the Calvinist minister of Nagydobrony in 1937 – and of versions of the Third Testament copied by three followers.

[6] The figures in brackets refer to the numbering of the Dercen Third Testament copy.

[7] G. ANDRÉ 1982; KISS 1942; DREWERMANN 1985 (one chapter also appeared in Hungarian in 1991 under the title: "Jelenések, isteni elhívások, víziók és próféciák" [Apparitions, divine callings, visions and prophets]. *Egyház és Világ* II, 13:6–12).

asked questions her followers addressed me to a "spiritual sister" in Dercen, Ida Balla, a spinster crippled in childhood, saying that she was the person able to interpret the Words and visions of the Third Testament. "She has been given this grace", and as the lay-leader of the 20 to 30-member peasant ecclesiola still operating in Dercen, she does so every Sunday afternoon. Thus, in presenting the visions of the prophetess I have relied mainly on the explanations and interpretations of Ida Balla and her circle, who call themselves the "workers of the Third Testament".

The method I use for analysis could perhaps be called "anthropological hermeneutics".[8] I attempt to link the reading and aesthetically perceived level of the texts with an approach that interprets retrospectively and also decodes the historical and spiritual aspects.

One of the central themes and main messages of the Third Testament is to confirm that the teachings of Mariska Borku are not in contradiction with the Bible; she is not the founder of a sect but an intermediary. She carries out her activity under divine inspiration, with the help of the Holy Spirit, for the good of her immediate community.

The Words of Mariska Borku stress in a number of places that the Third Testament and the Bible (Old and New Testaments) belong together, forming a three-part whole. The following pronouncement is practically unassailable theologically and a manifest truth in her folkloric culture which favoured the tripartite principle:

God says: in the Old Testament: I am as the Father,
In the New Testament I appear as the Son,
And in the Third Testament I teach and speak
As the Saviour by the Holy Spirit.

"When a prophet of the Lord is among you
I reveal myself to him in visions
I speak to him in dreams" – we read in the Bible. (Numbers 12:6)

I found in my fieldwork that the majority of my informants attributed coherent meaning to the happenings of real life and the pronouncements and visions of the Third Testament. They constantly compared the events of everyday life and history with the Words of Mariska Borku and were able to explain and accept the most varied and unexpected life situations with these texts calling for spiritual awakening, patience and charity and strengthening their sense of being chosen.

For example: *"A cloud of darkness has descended on the house of prayer"* – wrote Mariska Borku in one passage, and her followers in Nagydobrony link this pronouncement with the real fact that in the Soviet period the churches were closed and children under 18 were forbidden to exercise their religion.

Allow me to cite two visions of particular current political relevance in the Third Testament:

[8] On the model of the literary hermeneutics of H. R. JAUSS 1981. See also ORBÁN 1992.

1. *"I was taken in spirit by an angel from river to river and from lakes to lakes. And the angel pointed to the lake and river and said: – The waters in these are poisoned. – The angel of death came down and took me to the dried up river and there were dead fish there, and took me to a swampy lake, and they teemed there. And finally, the angel took me to a mountain, this well was dug by Noah, and I saw a multitude of living fish in it, and said: – This is the living water gushing from inside the mountain, that you have received from Jesus for preservation. These fish drink from it and eat manna under the palm-trees."*

According to Ida Balla, leader of the lay congregation, the poisoned waters are the evil teachings of the Russians and the communists, which spread over a very great area, *"from rivers to rivers and from lakes to lakes"*. These evil teachings are causing the destruction of human life. The swampy lake symbolizes the church which is full of errors and therefore its followers live with great difficulty ("wasting away"!); it is only the fish in *"living water"* in Noah's well, the "workers of the Third Testament" – who prosper. An important message of the visions of the prophetess was dissatisfaction with the Calvinist Church and the priesthood who failed to ease the "spiritual hunger" of the believers. In these visions the walls of the church are cracked, only the foundations are intact; in cases it has fallen in ruins and she helps to rebuild it; or the path leading to the church is overgrown with weeds and she has to clear it; elsewhere the angel shows her at the Communion table how to prepare good food for the congregation.

It is difficult for the outsider to decide which vision of the prophetess should be understood in a figurative sense and which have concrete content applying to a local event. Her followers know this exactly, although they emphasize that Mariska Borku did not prophesy, "she did not do superstition" (that is, she was not a seer or a healer), her task with the help of the Holy Spirit was spiritual guidance and enlightenment, setting an example and bearing witness. As Ida Balla put it: "She was like Hobab for us."[9]

I did not understand the following vision in the Third Testament either, until Ida Balla explained it:

2. *"Early in the morning I was taken up to the mountain of faith* (by the Lord). *A stone's throw from the mountain, where I was standing, columns of fire in the form of banners descended from the heavens, and I thought they would burn the earth. As I saw this, I prayed more fervently to the Lord, and then I saw a divine hand reaching down to the very lowest fire, and it pulled up that great fire. Standing on the mountain I gave thanks to the Lord because I survived. Thy will be done, my Father. Amen."*

I quote Ida Balla's explanation: "You will be remembering the Prague Spring? Well then the two sides, the western side and the Soviet Union, they were a-sitting in the train here, because Tiszaágtelek and Ágcsernyő are close, – that's where they were, and Mariska Borku told how the soldiers were set up there, all the land around Ágtelek and Nagydobrony was full of them, because World War Three would have

[9] See Numbers 10: 29–32.

started here, they would have clashed here. But then the Lord averted that. It doesn't matter that the Soviets occupied Czechoslovakia! That was the Lord's will. Because if the West had occupied it, then World War Three, the battlefield would have started here, not in Russia, because its border (that is, of the USSR) was here then, *but the Lord defended this area for the sake of the prophet, because the Third Testament wasn't yet written then.* Then He reached down, then pulled up the great fire with His hand, then they reached an agreement: the Soviet Union occupied Czechoslovakia, they agreed there on the train, then we were spared the soldiers. – But Mariska Borku said that – if the Lord hadn't pulled the fire with His hand – not even the black soil would have been left here! Such a great mercy! *This is how we were led by the Lord, how we knew where history stands.*"

All the Words of the Third Testament show a thorough knowledge of the Bible, and in particular the Revelation of Saint John and the Psalms. It is actually a paraphrase of the Bible. The layout of the notebooks containing the Third Testament – the arrangement of the texts in two columns and their numbering – reveals the biblical model. And the material collected locally provided abundant evidence that in the culture found today in the Calvinist villages of Sub-Carpathia the language of everyday religious communication is a figurative language full of biblical similes, metaphors and parables (in reality, the language used in the beautiful translation of the Bible done in 1590 by Gáspár Károli). In their spontaneous prayers, dream and vision narratives, and in their religious poems the "workers of the Third Testament" use the imagery of that translation, as well as the style and phraseology of an 18th century Calvinist book of prayer[10] that has appeared in numerous editions. It was among the most moving experiences of my career to hear the eloquence of these barely educated women and to see their deeply experienced faith in God.

The exceptionally rich collection of visions in the Bible paraphrase of Mariska Borku is quite literally *narrative theology*.[11] Further analysis of this material offers a unique possibility for getting to know and understand Calvinist spirituality and folk mentality in Sub-Carpathia.[12] Up to now the ministers, representatives of the local church only forbade its use if it came to attention, or from the outset ignored it. But none of them took the trouble to look into these folk manuscripts, to "decode" the "message" this prophetic tradition had for them, too. The entire activity and personality of the prophetess of Tiszaágtelek and the narrative tradition that has grown up around her Words all show what a wide gap there still is between the so-called elite and folk culture. More precisely, how the people attempt to reconcile the phenomena of reality with official theology, how they reshape it according to their own laws and adapt it into their own traditional ideology, folklore.

Although the peasant-prophetess *carried out individual religious activity*, the *influence* of her extraordinary life-work is *communal* and many of its characteristics are

[10] György SZIKSZAY: Keresztyényi tanítások és imádságok a keresztyén embernek külön-különféle állapotai és szükségei szerint. [Christian Teachings and Prayers for the Multifarious Conditions and Needs of the Christian] Debrecen 1795.

[11] On this concept and the anthropology of the senses, see W. BRÜCKNER 1979.

[12] GACSÁLYI 1985; SÁNDOR 1998.

universal.[13] The Third Testament is not only an unmatched document of Hungarian-language Protestant folklore, but was also a source of spiritual strength for the Hungarians of Sub-Carpathia during the years of Soviet oppression, which strengthened their sense of belonging together and was an integral part of the survival strategy of more than one small village community. For it exhorted patience, steadfastness and unconditional faith in God, and proclaimed religious ecumenism, saying:

"The Word is addressed to everyone!"

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[13] A. LJUNGDAHL 1975; DREWERMANN 1985.

RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS AND CONGREGATIONS IN WEST ESTONIA FROM THE MID-18th TO THE BEGINNING OF THE 20th CENTURY: THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE ESTONIAN AND ESTONIAN-SWEDISH POPULAR CULTURE

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Abstract: From the 16th century, Estonia has been a predominantly Lutheran country. Nevertheless, since the 1740s several religious movements have occurred in Estonia occasionally conflicting with the established Lutheran Church. More serious Christianisation among the Estonians began with the Moravian movement which spread widely in Estonia during the 18th and 19th centuries. The Moravian congregations stayed inside the Lutheran Church. The next influential religious movements in the 19th century were the movement of the Heaven-Travellers and shifting from the Lutheran to the Russian Orthodox Church. After the 1880s, various Protestant congregations sprang up in Estonia and developed into a considerable power alongside the Lutheran and Orthodox Churches. Throughout the period, discussed in this paper (from the 1740s to the beginning of the 20th century), the main centres of the new religious movements have been in the counties of West Estonia inhabited not only by the Estonians, but also by the community of the Estonian Swedes. The paper discusses the religious movements in West Estonia and the influence of these movements on the popular culture of the Estonians and the Estonian Swedes.

Keywords: Estonia, Lutheran Church, Moravian movement, Russian Ortodox Church

According to the confession dominating in official religious life, Estonia in the 18th century could be called a Lutheran country. Yet the more serious Christianising of the previously rather formally Christian country-folk was brought about not by the official Lutheran Church, but the religious movement of Brethren congregations spreading within the Lutheran Church. The Brethren movement began to spread wider among the Estonian peasantry in the 1740s, gathering greater momentum in the counties of West Estonia: Saaremaa, Läänemaa and Hiiumaa. The West Estonian counties remained the main centres of the Brethren movement in Estonia in the 19th century, too. In the 1840s, an extensive tendency appeared in Saaremaa to change from Lutheranism to Russian Orthodoxy; in the 1880s, the same trend spread to Läänemaa and Hiiumaa. The movement of religious awakening which began in West Estonia in the last quarter of the 19th century, gave rise to the appearance of new Free Churches in Estonia. Several other minor religious movements took place in West Estonia in the beginning of the 20th century and these regions have maintained certain peculiarities of religious life as compared to the rest of Estonia all through the 20th century.

The aim of the paper is to present a survey of the religious movements and congregations in West Estonia from the 1740s up to the year 1918, when Estonia was part of the Russian Empire. The article also discusses the roots and impact of these movements on the popular culture of the Estonians and Estonian Swedes (the

Swedes had begun settling on the islands and coast of Western Estonia from the 13th–14th centuries onward). Also, the developments of the religious institutions of West Estonia have been briefly compared to what happened in the religious life of the rest of Estonia and the neighbouring countries. The author has limited himself mainly to Christian congregations and religious movements, although mention is made briefly of the heathen beliefs surviving into the 18th–20th centuries.

OVERVIEW OF RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS AND CONGREGATIONS IN WEST ESTONIA FROM THE MID-18th TO THE BEGINNING OF THE 20th CENTURY

The roots of the *United Brethren (Moravian, Herrnhuter) movement* go back to the 15th-century religious movement of the Bohemian and Moravian brethren, the followers of which founded the Herrnhut community in Germany, in 1722. Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf became head of the Herrnhuter congregation founded in 1727. One of the characteristic features of the Herrnhuter movement was active missionary work. At least 81 missionaries were sent out from Herrnhut in the years 1729–1743, to awaken Estonian and Latvian peasantry to religion. The peasants accepted the German brethren – simple artisans and teachers, in the most part – because they learned the local language and belonged to a lower class than the local German landlords. Nevertheless the success of the Herrnhuter missionaries depended largely on the support of the local Lutheran clergy and landlords. Most of the Herrnhuter missionaries arrived in Estonia after 1738–1739, preparing the ground for the extensive religious awakening that spread among the peasantry at the beginning of the 1740s (see: ILJA 1995).

In North Estonia, the Brethren movement spread widest in Läänemaa and Hiiumaa, where the number of members of the Brethren congregations grew to about 2000, in North Estonia as a whole, the number was about 4800 (ILJA 1995: 240–244). Side by side with Estonians, active part was taken in the religious movements also by the Estonian Swedes. The parishes of Vormsi and Noarootsi in West Estonia, settled mainly by Estonian Swedes, remained the main centres of religious movements in Estonia up to the emigration of Estonian Swedes in the 1940s.

As for South Estonia, Saaremaa rose to a leading position in the Brethren movement, which was led there by the superintendent of the Lutheran Church of Saaremaa, Eberhard Gutsleff junior. Several phenomena alien to the Lutheran Church can be observed in the religious movement of the Saaremaa peasantry, such as the rebaptising of adults and banning work on Thursdays and Saturdays. Prayer meetings lasted for days and nights and saw trembling, dropping down, motionless lying. People had visions and revelations of Christ's bleeding body or hand, of heaven- and hell-travelling, of a heavenly rain of blood; others were soothe-saying prophetically. The Herrnhuters launched a campaign against folk culture, which they declared was heathen. Incidents are recorded of destroying old sacred groves and

sacrificial sites, as well as of jewellery, festive clothes and folk musical instruments. Alcohol, smoking, dancing and other such worldly pleasures were declared sinister; the same went for stealing and other such crimes (later on, Estonian history books have often operated with the obviously mistaken claim as though not a single crime had been performed in Saaremaa in the years 1740–1745). The same kind of bans and limitations remained characteristic of the Brethren movement later, too. In the 1740s, the number of people involved in the Brethren movement in Läänemaa, Hiiumaa and Saaremaa is estimated at about 5000–6000. In Saaremaa, Herrnhuters constituted about 20–25 per cent of peasantry (RUSSWURM 1855: 159, 283–284; GIRGENSOHN 1869: 453; PÕLDMÄE 1935: 127–128; PHILIPP 1974: 159; ILJA 1995: 240–244, 250).

The Brethren did not set up an independent church in the Baltic, remaining, according to their leaders' whishes, within the framework of the official Lutheran Church. Yet the separatism, open enmity towards the landlords and "religious exaggerations" gave rise to (and offered a pretext for) a growing dissatisfaction with the Brethren among landlords and clergy. In co-operation with authorities, the anti-Herrnhuter clergy achieved the banning of the movement with a decree from Empress Elisabeth, in 1743. The Herrnhuters' prayer houses were closed and the more prominent brethren were forced to leave the country. The Lutheran clergymen had to sign a declaration in which they agreed to ban the Herrnhuters' activities in their parishes (HARNACK 1860: 82; PÕLDMÄE 1936: 253; PHILIPP 1974: 162–163, 167; ILJA 1995: 197, 203–204). Yet obeying the orders was not controlled very consistently or effectively, depending largely on the attitude of the local landlords. Despite the bans, new Herrnhut brethren arrived in Estonia and secretly carried on their missionary work. Although the religious movement went underground and had to overcome obstacles and repressions, it continued with relative success in West Estonia. In 1801, there were 4422 members of Brethren congregations in Hiiumaa and Saaremaa (PHILIPP 1974: 388, 410–411), which made up about 11 per cent of peasantry.

The first half of the 19th century witnessed a new rise in the Brethren movement. It was favoured by the decree issued by Tsar Alexander I in 1817, allowing the Brethren congregations freely to pursue their activities, and by the *movement of Heaven-Travellers* which began to spread during the second decade of the century, mainly within the framework of the Brethren congregations. The centres of the movement of Heaven-Travellers were in Läänemaa and Hiiumaa, where the movement began in 1814. There arose several visionaries and prophets who claimed they had seen revelations and who conducted their own charismatic prayer meetings. The Heaven-Travellers, for the most part women and girls, claimed they had been to heaven and hell. They told whom they had met in heaven or who had been in hell, and foretold people their fate after death. As a result of the Heaven-Travellers' message, the Estonians and Estonian Swedes of Läänemaa burnt their festive dress and jewellery, in order to prepare themselves for the imminent end of the world. The German Moravian J. G. Werner has described how awakened peasants in Noarootsi parish prepared for the end of the World in 1816 burning all their earthly belongings following the orders of a local prophet. Some of the the Heaven-Travellers also

Fig. 1. The chapel of the Brethren congregation in Valjala parish, Saaremaa county, Estonia. Photo by E. Põld, 1938 (Photo Collection of the Estonian National Museum, No. 821: 5)

celebrated Saturday and Thursday. Several prophets from Hiiumaa were accused of baptising each other with fire and smoke and of celebrating the Holy Communion among themselves. Heaven-Travellers and their enthusiastic adherents caused much trouble to the Lutheran pastors and the German Moravians (RUSSWURM 1855: 235–236; PÕLDMÄE 1935; 1958: 457–459). In the early 1820s that ecstatic movement gradually died out, but the Brethren congregations in Western Estonia successfully continued their activities.

In the mid-1850s, there were almost 9000 members of Brethren congregations in Läänemaa, Hiiumaa and Saaremaa (constituting 8.6 per cent of the population in Saaremaa), and thousand more participated in the prayer meetings (in Saaremaa, they added up to about 15 per cent of the population). All over Estonia, the approximately 50 000 full members of the Brethren congregations made up about 6.7 per cent of the population. In 1839, the number of Brethren prayer houses in Estonia reached 156 (PHILIPP 1974: 219–221, 405–409), which exceeds by one third the number of Lutheran parish churches.

In the middle of the 19th century, the Lutheran Church engaged in active struggle against the Brethren congregations, particularly in South Estonia, and in the second half of the century the movement suffered an internal decline and a great drop in the numbers of membership. The decision of the 1857 Herrnhut Synod to stop direct activities of the Herrnhut centre in the Baltic region certainly played a part in the decline of the movement, too (see also: PHILIPP 1974: 321ff, 368–369).

Another important change in the religious life of West Estonia was the *move-*

Fig. 2. The prayer room of the chapel of the Brethren congregation in Valjala parish, Saaremaa county, Estonia. Photo by E. Põld, 1938 (Photo Collection of the Estonian National Museum, No. 821: 6)

ment from the Lutheran Church to the Russian Orthodox Church. In the years 1845–1848, about 17 per cent of South Estonian peasantry transferred their allegiances from Lutheran Church to Orthodox Church, mainly motivated by economic and social hopes. The percentage of those who shifted church was highest in Saaremaa, where by the year 1848, 29.8 per cent of the peasantry had adopted Russian Orthodox faith (KRUUS 1930: 344, 400). After this shift, the Russian Orthodox Church began to build new church buildings and schools for the Estonian peasantry, thus entering into active competition with the Lutheran Church. In the 1880s, the tendency to convert from the Lutheran to the Orthodox Church broke out in North Estonia, with its centres in Läänemaa and Hiiumaa. Tsarist authorities supported the spread of Orthodoxy and took steps against the Lutheran Church, which caused the growth of membership in the 15 Orthodox congregations of Saaremaa up to 40 per cent of the population by the turn of the 19th-20th centuries. In Läänemaa and Hiiumaa, 13.2 per cent of the population were Orthodox in 1897. The census of 1897 reveals that 84.2 per cent of the total population of Estonia were Protestants (mostly Lutherans) whereas 15 per cent were Russian Orthodox or Old Believers (PERVAJA 1905: 122–125; PALLI 1998: 29–31).

To a certain extent, another religious movement which swept over Läänemaa in the 1870s – *the Awakening of Läänemaa* – was also related to the shifting to Orthodoxy. The Awakening of Läänemaa began with the arrival of two Swedish missionaries, Thure Emanuel Thorén and Lars Johan Österblom. They started working as

teachers and missionaries in the Noarootsi and Vormsi parishes in 1873 (see: ÖSTERBLOM 1927; VALENTIN 1938: 40ff). In the 1870s–1880s, the new religious awakening began to spread among the Estonian Swedes and then among the Estonians, too. People began to strive for a salvation of their souls and were "saved". In new religious communities there also occurred several ecstatic practices, such as jumping, dancing, laughing and hand-clapping at the prayer meetings (SCHULTZ 1880: 580–581; *Protokoll* 1883: 5, 1884: 6; OSTERBLOM 1885: 39–43; NORMANN 1885: 113; BUSCH 1928: 32).

At the beginning of the 1880s, many converts in Läänemaa and Hiiumaa started to hold their own communion, baptism, wedding ceremonies and funeral services. The attitude of the Lutheran officials toward the movement had been more or less favourable at the beginning, but it became very hostile as soon as the converts started to secede from the Lutheran Church, which first happened in Vormsi, in 1880. One of the main reasons for that was the immorality and lack of real faith among the members of the Lutheran congregations (*Protokoll* 1881: 5–6; SPINDLER 1893: 156–157, 161; BUSCH 1928: 28–29).

The persecution by the secular authorities and Lutheran Church grew more vigorous, and the movement dispersed into different factions. The awakened people organised the first Baptist, Irvingite and Free Believers' congregations in Estonia. Many converts accepted the Orthodox faith in the 1880s. In the cradle of the awakening movement of Läänemaa, for instance – on Vormsi Island, more than 500 people or one fourth of the island's population converted to Orthodoxy in the 1880s, despite the fact that the Estonian Swedes of Vormsi did not understand the Russian language at all (*Protokoll* 1884: 6–7, 1885: 7; *Istoriko-statistitsheskoje* 1895: 540; *Iz Arhiva* 1910: 39ff.). Many converts also lost their intense religious feelings or remained faithful to the Lutheran Church and to the Brethren congregations under the Lutheran Church.

Up to the end of the 19th century, the most influential of the new congregations were the illegal Free Believers' communities. The Free Believers' movement also spread from Hiiumaa to Saaremaa county at the end of the 19th century. Several other confessions previously unknown in Estonia also began to spread among the West Estonians at the end of the 19th and beginning of 20th centuries. In Saaremaa, the Methodists gained particularly great support. The first Methodist congregation in Estonia was founded there in 1910 (see: RITSBEK 1996). Since the beginning of the 20th century, the Baptists have been the most influential among the new congregations in West Estonia.

Religious life outside the Lutheran Church in West Estonia remained active during the period of the Estonian Republic (1918–1940) and also during the period of the Soviet occupation in Estonia from the 1940s, despite the atheistic policy of Soviet authorities and rapid process of secularization, especially when comparing to the other regions of Estonia.

THE ROOTS OF THE RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE POPULAR CULTURE

There are several important factors that assisted or may have assisted in the arising and fast spreading of new outbursts of religiousness in West Estonia in the 18th and 19th centuries. Among these factors figures the poverty of the peasants, as well as the relative backwardness of schools and secular social life. Economic backwardness is most conspicuous in the coastal and island regions of West Estonia. All the greatest outbursts of religious feelings, however, occurred in the poorer coastal parishes. Next, the importance of (socio-) psychological factors in the broad and ecstatic spread of religious movements must be emphasised, as well as the role of leaders, both of local and foreign origin, in the arising and development of the movements.

We must also consider the connections of the religious movements of the counties of West Estonia and Estonia as a whole with the trends of religious life spreading in the neighbouring countries. Usually, the Christian religious movements in Estonia in the 18th and 19th centuries did not originate among the local peasantry but got at least the initial impact from outside Estonia. Foreign missionaries played an important role in the starting of the religious movements. Both the German Herrnhuters and the Swedish missionaries who started the Awakening of Läänemaa arrived from abroad. A certain role in the conversion of Estonian and Estonian Swedish peasants into Russian Orthodoxy was played by Russian clergy. The religious movements taking place elsewhere also help to understand better the trends of development of the West Estonian religious movements during the period of their organisation into different Free Churches, in the last quarter of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. At that time, various Protestant awakening movements and Free Churches were winning broader support in the Baltic guberniyas and Russia's European territories, as well as in the Lutheran countries of Scandinavia and elsewhere in the world (see: AMBURGER 1961; KLIBANOV 1965; NIKOLSKI 1988; HOPE 1995). In the last quarter of the 19th and beginning of 20th centuries, some of these religious movements and Free Churches reached not only West Estonia, but other parts of Estonia, too, mainly through the activities of foreign missionaries.

In their further development, the West Estonian religious movements acquired several characteristic features, too, especially the movement of the Heaven-Travellers and those of the last quarter of the 19th century. Thus, for instance, the religious awakening movement of Läänemaa features dancing in prayer meetings as a peculiarity, whereas in Hiiumaa, at the beginning of the 20th century, people acted the roles of different animals at prayer meetings. The rituals that gave rise to the name "vat-worshippers", that is, rituals where a vat was used for baptism or communion, also appear to be originally West Estonian. Uncommon are also efforts to "hatch out the God", to fly to the Heaven (together with a cow), going around naked, hunting the Devil all over the walls, stuffing the Bible into an oven and even attempts to offer people in burnt sacrifice (EAA, f 1249, n 1, s 77, 1140; *Walgus,* No. 5, 1884, No. 37, 1885; *Saarlane,* No. 25, 1887; *Olewik,* No. 36, 1902; OSTERBLOM

1885: 40–44; KÕPP 1926: 83). Yet, reports of such phenomena are frequently unreliable, just like stories about the custom of exchanging shirts or about sexual rites practised by the awakened. Even the extreme phenomena in the awakening movements, however, are not fully incredible in the light of reports about similar awakening movements elsewhere in the world. Essentially, the Estonian religious awakening movements of the 18th and 19th centuries were not much different from analogous movements elsewhere in Europe.

One of the main reasons why religious movements spread so rapidly and new Free Churches sprang up was the remoteness from the people of the Lutheran Church. Up to the founding of the independent Republic of Estonia in 1918, the overwhelming majority of Lutheran pastors were of German origin (see: SAARD 2000). The predominance of Germans was also supported by advowson, followed in most congregations, which forbade these congregations to choose a suitable pastor for themselves and forced them to accept the one chosen by the landlord and patron. Too large congregations also constituted a major drawback of the Lutheran "landlords' church". Unlike several popular religious movements and Free Churches, the official Church was not able to satisfy fully the people's religious needs. The language and turns of speech used by the peasant preachers in the prayer house must have been much better understood by the people than the sermon made by the Lutheran pastor. Probably one of the main secrets of the success of the awakening movements discussed above was in the emotional approach to religion and a more easily understandable message which the Lutheran Church could not offer. The persecution by the Lutheran Church of the awakened believers often only reinforced the convictions of those who had suffered for their faith and frequently caused hostility towards the Lutheran Church.

In the Estonian congregations of the Russian Orthodox Church, however, most of the priests were Estonians by the beginning of the 20th century (*Postimees,* No. 45–46, 1910). The Tsar's manifesto of 1905 in principle brought about religious tolerance, which was followed by an upsurge in the activities of the Free Churches and a small-scale re-conversion of Orthodox Estonians into the Lutheran Church. According to the census of 1922, the proportion of the Orthodox had grown to 19 per cent of the population of the Estonian Republic, a development mainly due to the annexing of basically Orthodox territories. 78.6 per cent of the population were registered as Lutheran (*Rahva demograafiline* 1924: 50). But neither the Lutheran nor the Orthodox Church was able to bring Christian teaching close to the Estonians and Estonian Swedes.

Perhaps it is only during the culmination of the Brethren movement that we can speak about a broader spread of the intense Christianity with really devoted adherents all over Estonia. At the same time we must not forget that only a minor part of the population was directly involved in the Brethren movement in the 18th and 19th centuries, amounting to no more than one tenth of the population even during its highest peak in the middle of the 19th century. Frequently this minority was also in opposition to the greater part of population who had not experienced religious awakening. No other Christian movements of comparable dimensions, covering all

Fig. 3. The prayer house in West Estonia. Photo by M. Rukki, 1913
(Photo Collection of the Estonian National Museum, No. 1347: 40)

of Estonia, have occurred in Estonia after the decline of the Brethren movement. Since the Lutheran and Orthodox Churches remained remote of the Estonian peasantry and the percentage of Free Church members was low, there was actually no reason up to the 20th century to speak about a more serious adherence of Estonians to any Christian confession. The religious life of the 20th century, however, can rather be characterised with the word "secularisation" than "Christianity". The answer to the question whether Christianity has ever been widely accepted in Estonia at all is rather in the negative than in the positive.

Several researchers also consider it possible to view the Brethren movement of the 18th–19th centuries as the first national movement of the Estonian peasantry or at least as a phenomenon preparing ground for such a movement (ILJA 1995: 237; PHILIPP 1974: 367). This view seems actually to be born out by the educational and literary activities, song production and starting of choirs by brethren with peasant origins. The Brethren societies were the first peasant organisations where it was possible freely to pursue collective activities without the direct intervention of landlords. Social emancipation and the growth of awareness among peasants was further promoted by involving numerous Estonian laymen and women in the supervising of congregations, by building prayer houses for funds collected from voluntary donations next to the official Lutheran churches, etc.

Yet it is obviously rash to regard the Brethren movement as a kind of national awakening or even a preparation for it. The main aim of the movement was still to awaken the country-folk religiously, to become the people of Jesus, not the people of

Estonia. A brother was an awakened peasant, a German Herrnhuter, even a Herrnhuter landlord, not an un-awakened peasant from the farmstead next door. The Herrnhuters were not note-worthily connected with the National Awakening movement that spread in Estonia during the second half of the 19th century and even worked against it. For those who had awakened, the line between "us" and "others" did not run so much by national or even social boundaries as according to the depth of faith, in places even according to membership in one certain congregation. But it was first and foremost the Herrnhuters, not ordinary Lutherans, who were considered deeply religious.

The influence of the Brethren congregations was highest in the West Estonian counties. But the difference of religious life of West Estonia from the rest of Estonia stands out more clearly in connection with the religious movements of the last quarter of the 19th century. If the earlier movements of the Brethren congregations and the Heaven-Travellers spread wider not only in West Estonia, but elsewhere in the country, too, this was not the case with the religious movements of the last quarter of the 19th century. It was the movement of National Awakening that spread at that time in the other Estonian counties; in Läänemaa, Hiiumaa and Saaremaa, however, it met with the least enthusiastic reception.

At the end of the 19th century, the activists of new religious movements took a hostile attitude towards popular culture, because of which old beliefs, folk tales and practices were suppressed and forgotten. The Awakening of Läänemaa and preaching of new prophets caused destruction of various phenomena of the old popular culture of the Estonians and Estonian Swedes. In several regions of West Estonia colorful national costumes, national music and music instruments, popular songs and dances, folk religion and sorcery were considered to be sinful by the "Children of God". For example, in 1870s missionary Lars Johan Österblom declared the folk songs, dances and costumes of the Estonian Swedes of Vormsi Island and Thure Emanuel Thorén the dances of Noarootsi parish to be sinful (BUSCH 1928: 12). Several Swedish authors (DANELL 1909; WENNERSTRÖM 1931) have also stressed that Österblom did not tolerate old folk culture and that sense of national identity of the Estonian Swedes weakened because of his missionary work, as all the Swedes and stonians had to become brothers and sisters disregarding their nationality.

The revivalist movements in West Estonia have also changed the local folklore. Estonian folklorist Oskar LOORITS claimed that the Moravian movement was so influential in West Estonia that it partly wiped out old folk songs and stories, replacing them with prayers, religious songs and stories about local prophets (LOORITS 1932: 39). Another Estonian folklorist Rudolf PÕLDMÄE also mentioned that West Estonia abounds in stories about prophets, heaven-travellers, revelations, spirits and everything supernatural (PÕLDMÄE 1938: 439). Some prophecies of the West Estonian 19-century prophets have been believed in up to the 20th century.

At least among the converts of the Awakening of Läänemaa new religious songs replaced the old ones. The so called Swedish songs, brought by missionaries Thorén and Österblom were soon translated into Estonian and became part of repertory of

Baptists and Free congregations (*Eesti Postimees,* No. 29, 1881; *Walgus,* No. 5, 1884; OSTERBLOM 1885: 50; EKM, KO, f47, m 41:33, 11/7).

While the revivalist movements fought old popular culture, many features in these revivalist movements seem to suggest that the rituals and beliefs of converts were also influenced by folk beliefs and the profane. Some authors claim that in many centers of the revivalist movements in Läänemaa and Saaremaa, the pagan beliefs have been successfully preserved up to the beginning of the 20th century (*Eesti Postimees,* No. 26, 1884; *Wirulane,* No. 24, 1884; *Saarlane,* No. 38, 1896; No. 3, 1897; No. 2, 10, 1900; *Olewik,* No. 55, 1905, p. 871; MARTNA 1914: 122–124). In the last decades of the 19th and beginning of 20th centuries, there existed a rich heritage of older popular beliefs and practices in West Estonia. They existed there together with the popular forms of Christianity spread by different confessions, occasionally intertwining and influencing each other. Therefore it would not be correct to speak about the complete havoc wrought at traditional religion by the earlier Christian religious movements, just like the reports of the complete victory of the religiously awakened over folk musical instruments, clothes, dances, drinking, crime and other "sins" at the highest moments of various religious movements are, as a rule, exaggerated.

The revivalist movements also changed the attitudes of converts towards non-believers, as well as towards secular education and literature, government, state and laws, which were sometimes considered by believers to come from the Devil. Several illegal Free Believers' congregations claimed that they did not need official permission from the Lutheran Church and secular authorities for their activities. They ignored several earthly laws and felt themselves free in performing their rituals and forming their belief system. Some converts believed that the only power they have to ask for permission is Jesus. Others refused to pay taxes and neglected orders of police or court. In several places of West Estonia conflicts between converts and local masters, court officials and Lutheran pastors arose. Some converts also claimed that Lutheran schools and school teachers had come from the Devil and did not send their children to schools where educated pagans were brought up. Several new congregations, especially the Baptist and Free Believers' congregations, started to teach the children of their members by themselves (EAA, f29, n 2, s 5480, l 148–150; EKM, KO, f 47, m 27:19; SCHULTZ 1880: 581–582; *Walgus,* No. 26, 1884; NORMANN 1885: 107–108, 113; *Iz Arhiva* 1910: 86–87; KÕPP 1926: 83).

Many converts in the 1870s and 1880s started to despise all the non-believers and members of the Lutheran Church and considered themselves to be the only real believers, the saved and holy people. All the outsiders were labeled children of Devil and many "Children of God" gave up all relationship with old friends and relatives who had not experienced awakening (*Protokoll* 1882: 6; *Eesti Postimees,* No. 6, 1884, No. 8, 1889; EAA, f 1278, n 1, s 28, 16, 16p; LINDENBERG 1891: 490; KURRIKOFF 1894: No. 102). This change in attitude was caused partly by the several forms of repressions by the local people, who were not converted. The converts were frequently mocked at, beaten and threatened to be killed (*Teekäija,* No. 7, 1925; TUTTAR–DAHL 1929: 75; EAA, f 1278, n 1, s 28, l 6). In some pieces of folklore from

West Estonia the saved people have also been ridiculed (see: *Kelle* 1963). At the same time the preachers and missionaries of the awakened people tried to save the sinful souls through their active missionary work all over the West Estonia, other parts of Estonia and even in Russia.

The every-day life of awakened peasants also began to differ considerably from the life of their "sinful" neighbors. Many converts of the Awakening of Läänemaa strove for more moral life, and thus abandoned drinking, smoking and theft. For example, in Noarootsi parish in Läänemaa many peasants, afraid of torments of Hell, abandoned drinking, smoking and dancing (*Protokoll* 1876: 23; *Kristlik Perekonna leht,* No. 11, 1923, p. 162). Missionary Österblom has written that drinking, dirty language, smoking and other sins disappeared almost completely from Vormsi island. He maintained that the whole communities have ceremoniously buried their tobacco pipes (ÖSTERBLOM 1927). However, Österblom's description of his own success cannot be relied upon uncritically.

We can conclude, that the main revivalist movements in West Estonia – the Moravian movement since 1740s, movement of Heaven-Travellers and Awakening of Läänemaa since 1870s, – have caused changes not only in the lives of the awakened Estonians and Estonian Swedes but also in the cultural and social life of the involved peasant communities. The above mentioned changes influenced the old folk culture, religious beliefs and everyday life of peasantry. But at the same time the converts became somewhat isolated from the mundane and their "sinful" neighbors. The direct and long-lasting impact of the religious movements was confined rather to people involved in these movements than to the West Estonian peasantry as a whole. At the same time, the popular culture had also some influence on peasant revivalism. One of the main consequences of the religious movements in West Estonia was the creation of serious alternatives to the Lutheran Church.

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EKM = Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum (Estonian Museum of Literature, Tartu)

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